# DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 207 178 EA 013 937

| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Morris, Van Cleve; And Others |
| TITLE | The Urban Principal. Discretionary Decision-Making in a Large Educational Organization. |
| INSTITUTION | Illinois Univ., Chicago. Coll. of Education. |
| SPONS AGENCY | National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, D.C. |
| PUB DATE | 81 |
| GRANT | NIE-G-79-0019 |
| NOTE | 239p. |
| | |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC10 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Administrator Role; *Behavior; Board Administrator Relationship; *Decision Making; Ethnography; Information Utilization; *Interprofessional Relationship; *Principals; Public Relations; *School Administration; School Attitudes; School Community Relationship; Student School Relationship; Teacher Administrator Relationship; Vertical Organization |
| IDENTIFIERS | Chicago Public Schools IL |

ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study of 16 Chicago school principals explores the principal's effect on students and teachers within the school; on parents and laymen in the community; on their superiors in the administrative hierarchy; and on themselves as career-oriented professionals. A brief literature review relates studies examining the principalship of elements of the current study. Both elementary and secondary principals were found to spend most of their time in principal-initiated contacts with staff, faculty, and students. These principals affected their schools by balancing stabilization and enhancement, transforming attitudes that opposed school policy, and controlling the climate to foster uninterrupted learning. In the community, the principals had to diplomatically shape parent expectations of the schools' capabilities. Principals' responses to their superiors ranged from ignoring orders to overt disobedience in order to protect staff morale. The principals often short-circuited the system and used superiors' indecision to their schools' advantage. They shaped their jobs to suit their personal preferences and work styles. They relied more on one-to-one, face-to-face communications in contrast to businessmen who depend more on group meetings and written memoranda. This study also describes ways principals obtained and utilized professional information. (MMJ)

***********************************************************************
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
***********************************************************************

ED207178

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

# THE URBAN PRINCIPAL

## DISCRETIONARY DECISION-MAKING IN A LARGE EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION

EA 013 937

The National
Institute of
Education
U.S. Department of
Education
Washington, D.C. 20208

# THE URBAN PRINCIPAL

## DISCRETIONARY DECISION-MAKING IN A LARGE EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION

The Report of

a research project funded by the National Institute of Education

Van Cleve Morris, Professor
Chief Investigator
Robert L. Crowson, Associate Professor
Emanuel Hurwitz, Jr., Associate Professor
Cynthia Porter-Gehrie, Assistant Professor

College of Education
University of Illinois at Chicago Circle
Chicago, Illinois

The research reported in this document was funded by the National Institute of Education, Department of Education, under Grant Number NIE-G-79-0019. The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Education and the National Institute of Education.

# FOREWORD

The research investigation reported in this document has covered several years and is the result of the collaboration of many individuals throughout the educational community. We, the research team, are especially mindful of our debt to Mr. Sam Dolnick, President of the Chicago Principals Association at the time of the inception of this project. He was instrumental in arranging for initial seed money from the Association and in helping us design the study, select the sample of subjects and facilitate our access to the schools for on-site data gathering.

Mr. Donn Wadley of the staff of the Chicago Board of Education was instrumental in guiding the research proposal through the Board of Education approval process, culminating in the official endorsement of the project by Dr. Joseph Hannon, then General Superintendent of the Chicago schools.

We wish also to mention Dr. Guilbert Hentschke, then Director of the Board's Center for Urban Education, who facilitated our contacts with individual school principals in seeking their participation in the study; and Ms. Loretta Nolan, President of the Chicago Principals Association, who carried forward the cooperation of the Association during the most concentrated period of research in the field.

In addition, we acknowledge a particular debt to Mr. Tom James of the Spencer Foundation who arranged for the Foundation's support of a Pilot Project, the results of which were critical in shaping the final research design into a proposal fundable at the national level. We are especially appreciative of the liaison role of Mr. Fritz Mulhauser of the National Institute of Education who served as our Program Officer in that agency during the course of the study.

We benefited greatly from the advice of our Academic Advisory Committee consisting of Professors Charles Bidwell, Sheppard Kellam, and Paul Peterson of the University of Chicago, Professor Russ Spillman of the Ohio State University, and Professor Bruce McPherson, now our colleague at Chicago Circle. The study was greatly enhanced by the guidance of our Professional Advisory Committee consisting of Mr. Preston Bryant, Superintendent, District 10; Ms. Joan M. Ferris, Principal, Dett; Mr. Martin Gabriel, Dept. of Special Education; Mr. Martin Gray, Principal, Amundsen; Ms. Olga Kaszubowski, Principal, Dirksen; Mr. Joseph LaVizzo,Jr., Principal, Bryn Mawr; Ms. Esther Lawson, Principal, Hirsch; Mr. Theodore Lewis, Superintendent, District 19; Mr. Charles Lutzow, Principal, Durso; Mr. James F. Moore, Superintendent, District 19; Mr. Lawrence J. McBride, Principal, Fiske; Loretta Nolan, President, Chicago Principals Association; Gerald Heing, Asst. Superintendent, Dept. of Curriculum; Herschel J. Rader, Principal, Johnson; Mary E. Shannon, Principal, Ogden; Thomas Van Dam, Superintendent, School District 151, and Donn Wadley, Director, Program Development.

Finally, we pay special tribute to our participating principals who must, regrettably, remain anonymous. As subjects for this research, they were gracious in accepting us into their work routines and patiently forbearing in their willingness to be trailed around, day after day, by a stranger. We are pleased to say that these relationships eventually grew into professional friendships as the investigation proceeded.

Van Cleve Morris
Robert L. Crowson
Emanuel Hurwitz, Jr.
Cynthia Porter-Gehrie

March 20, 1981

* * *

We were assisted in the preparation and analysis of the data by Miss Sandra Durr, Mrs. Patti Vile, Mrs. Lorie Dinkelman and Miss Waltraud Schacher, serving as graduate research assistants. Mrs. Catherine Morris participated in reviewing drafts of several chapters. Miss Maryellen Owens prepared the daily protocols and Miss Sue Henderson prepared the final manuscript.

N.B. All names of schools and individuals in the following account have been changed. In addition, factors of principal's gender, school location, and special identifying circumstances have been scrambled in order to protect the anonymity of our subjects.

# THE URBAN PRINCIPAL

## Discretionary Decision-making in a large educational organization

Chapter Topic Page

### PART ONE: OVERVIEW

I. INTRODUCTION (history of the study, overall design, analytic strategies, plan of the report) . . . . . . . . . . 3

II. REVIEW of the literature on the principalship (with special attention to ethnographic studies). . . . . . . . . 13

### PART TWO: THE PRINCIPAL'S WORK PROFILE

III. THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 29

IV. THE SECONDARY PRINCIPAL . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 51

### PART THREE: DISCRETIONARY DECISION-MAKING

V. PRINCIPALING AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE SCHOOL . . . . . . . . . . . 71

A. STABILIZATION AND ENHANCEMENT: A Manager's Balancing Act . . 73

Some of the principal's activities, perhaps most, serve to make the organization run smoothly, protecting it from disruptions and surprises. Sometimes, however, the principal wants to change things, start new programs, reshuffle staff or rearrange duties in order to improve the school's work. Too much stabilization deadens the enterprise; too much enhancement is disorienting and counter-productive. How does the principal find the right balance?

B. THE TRANSFORMATION OF ATTITUDES: Emotional Changes in a Mini-Bureaucracy . . . . . . 85

In moving the work of the school along, the principal must not only introduce new ideas. He/she must sometimes re-orient the entire mentality of a faculty. What are the strategies for getting people to change attitudes deeply held, so that new educational possibilities can be realized?

C. CLIMATE CONTROL: Instructional Leadership by Indirection . . 93

Conventional wisdom specifies that the principal's primary job is the evaluation and upgrading of instruction. But principals spend very little time in the classroom observing teaching. Instead, they use their time in other activities, cultivating good learning conditions by managing the psychic ambiance of the school community.

Chapter Topic Page

VI. PRINCIPALING AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE COMMUNITY . . . . . . . . . . 107

A. SOCIALIZING THE CLIENTS: Shaping community expectations . . . 109

The layman has always harbored grand fantasies as to the power of the public school. The bulk of these expectations can never be satisfied, even under the best of circumstances. The principal's managerial work includes de-educating the public about the school's capabilities, and re-educating parents and other community people as to just what they can and cannot expect from their local school.

B. CRAZY MOTHER AS MASCOT: Disarming the Volatile Critic . . . . 117

Every school has a parent whose self-appointed task it is to bug the principal. This harassment customarily focuses on the school's handling of his/usually her child, but sometimes spills over into complaints about the school's role in the community at large. What are the principal's bag of strategems for handling this kind of "professional complainer?"

C. HOLDING THE CUSTOMERS: Headhunting in Scholastica . . . . . . 125

Budgets are now tied directly to enrollments. Teacher allocations are a direct function of boys and girls in daily attendance. Accordingly, one of the new tasks of the principal is recruitment of students. How does the principal enhance the headcount? And how does the principal keep the kids in school instead of home watching TV or roaming the streets?

D. IMAGE BUILDING: Making Non-educational Factors Work for You . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 133

Every school has an advertising problem: How to look good to the customers. The educational program itself is not a glamorous article. Hence, the school's reputation as a school sometimes rides on other things: football teams, dramatic productions, marching bands--all leading to a good press. How does the principal engineer this non-educational visibility to enhance the status of his institution?

VII. PRINCIPALING AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE HIERARCHY . . . . . . . . . . 141

A. CREATIVE INSUBORDINATION: Civilized Disobedience . . . . . . 143

One of the principal's primary responsibilities is to protect the integrity and working rhythm of his own school. Bureaucratic instructions from the upper echelons of the system often do not reflect an understanding of how individual schools function. Accordingly, on occasion, and to protect the working relationships, not to mention

Chapter Topic Page

the morale, of his/her staff, a principal must intentionally disregard or deliberately misunderstand an order from above. Such insubordination is a managerial art form.

B. SHORT-CIRCUITING THE LABYRINTH: To Hell with the S.O.P. . . . . 151

After an organization grows to a certain size, dedication to Standard Operating Procedure is a marginal value, sometimes downright counterproductive. Such bureaucratic line discipline is appropriate only for "high impact" decisions. For the day-to-day running of a school, the principal must get the job done even if it means running around and outside of the chain of command.

C. THE SHIFTING CHESSBOARD AND THE SCRAMBLE FOR POWER . . . . . 159

The term of the present study has inadvertently coincided with a period of traumatic upheaval in the Chicago Public School System--community militance, faculty/administrator desegregation, system-wide "Mastery Learning" mandates, "Access-To-Excellence" innovations, Department of Justice busing guidelines, and finally, threatened financial collapse. As the system is buffeted, month by month, by external demands and internal mismanagement, the rules begin to change. The chessboard shifts beneath the player's feet, but the players must go on playing. In these circumstances, the principal's discretionary areas of action expand. Some principals recoil from this phenomenon but others, more imaginative, use this situation to aggrandize their position and increase their power.

VIII. PRINCIPALING AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE PRINCIPAL . . . . . . . . . . 173

A. SHAPING THE JOB TO SUIT: Maximizing Job Satisfaction by Design . . . . . . . . . . . . . 175

Like other workers, principals hold attitudes toward their own job; they like some parts, dislike other parts. As managers, principals can shape the job to their own liking--spending time on the things they are good at or enjoy doing. Principals especially enjoy working on problems which they know in advance can be solved, that have an "end product" of some sort. If principals cannot fully program their own success, they can at least program their own job satisfaction, which is perhaps the next best thing.

Chapter Topic Page

## PART FOUR: BEHAVIOR AND INFORMATION

IX. PRINCIPALS AND BUSINESSMEN: How They Manage . . . . . . . . . . . . 185

After watching businessmen at work, Henry Mintzberg (in his The Nature of Managerial Work) has analyzed the job of the manager in the business world into ten distinct categories of behavior. How do school principals compare with businessmen in the way they conduct the act of managing a school?

X. OBTAINING AND USING PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION: The Knowledge Producers and School Principaling . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 203

The educational literature is full of information on teaching, learning, evaluating, money management, budget-making, personnel practices, staff development, student discipline. Does the school principal consult this literature? If so, how does this knowledge work its way into the principal's work. If not, how does the principal acquire and utilize professional information relevant to his job?

XI. CONCLUSION: TOWARD THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING . . . . . . . . . . . 213

By focusing on the effects of principaling behavior--on the school, on the community, on the hierarchy, and on the principal's own career progress--we are now in a position to generalize from our findings and draw this account to a close. Specifically, what have we learned about discretionary behavior which can illuminate the study of school administration? We offer seven general propositions which emerge from our findings and which, in turn, can serve as hypotheses for future inquiries into the school principalship.

## PART FIVE: APPENDICES

A. Rosters of Professional and Academic Advisory Committees . . 227
B. The Decision-making of Researchers: A Look into the Process of Ethnographic Research in School Administration . . 229
C. The Heisenberg Problem: The Effect of the Observer on Observed Phenomena . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 237

# PART ONE

# OVERVIEW

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## A. BACKGROUND

The study of school administration over the past forty years has passed through three definable epochs. In the late Thirties and Forties, Managerial Task Definition was the dominating focus. Students of general management theory such as Mary Follett, Luther Gulick, Fritz Roethlisberger, Chester Barnard and Peter Drucker set the tone for this early emphasis. Characteristically, these scholars examined an organization--usually a government bureau or a business corporation--as a total organic entity. Out of all the tasks that must be performed, they asked, what are those specialized types of work reserved for those at the top? The culmination of this effort was Gulick's master list of things managers do, celebrated in the well-remembered acronym POSDCORB: Planning, Organization, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating Reporting and Budgeting.[1]

Following the lead of these pioneers and working from these primary categories, scholars in school administration like George D. Strayer, Jesse B. Sears, Paul Mort and Arthur B. Moehlman focused on the work of school principals and superintendents in much the same way, eventually delineating analogous categories. Thus, in some of the major works of the period, we find textbook rubrics in the Gulick tradition:

"The Executive Activity (Organization)"
"The Personnel Activity"
"Finance"
"Planning as an Element in the Administrative Process"
"Organization as an Element in the Administrative Process"
"Directing as an Element in the Administrative Process"
"Coordination as an Element in the Administrative Process"

Such were the topics of graduate seminars in educational administration during this period.

In the Fifties and Sixties, attention turned away from these quasi-theoretical categories in favor of what might be called the Contextual Interaction Field approach. Instead of focusing on the strictly in-house tasks assigned to the administrator, scholars began to take an "open systems" view of the organizational landscape, surveying the total social environment of the manager, both inside and outside the organization. Taking their cue from social science research generally and from the management literature particularly, specialists in school administration directed their attention to the client-publics with which a school administrator must deal--the people the principal works *for*, works *with*, works *against*--in performing the managerial function. These are the constituencies to which the administrator is expected to respond--teachers, students, superintendent and central office staff, board of education, parents, community groups, government agencies, courts. This array of client-publics constitute the spectrum of relationships which every school administrator eventually encounters. Understanding these several constituencies, so argued the scholars, would provide a more situational, less technical definition of a school administrator's performance area, and hence a more realistic portrait of administrative responsibility.

Thus, during these two decades, the journal literature and administration textbooks increasingly focused on these client groups and the principal's interaction with them. One popular text was Administrative Relationships--A Case Book by Jack Culbertson, Paul Jacobson and Theodore Reller.[2] Perhaps the most widely used and the paradigmatic of this genre is Campbell, Cunningham, Nystran and Usdan's The Organization and Control of American Schools[3] in which the client groups are taken up one by one and analyzed for their impact on administrative decision-making.

In the Seventies and Eighties, a third mode of inquiry has made its entry into the study of school administration: the Ethnographic approach. The value of this methodology in the administrative arena is still under vigorous discussion, and the ultimate contribution of ethnography to management theory remains to be calculated.

Nevertheless, the promise of ethnographic strategies has aroused the interest of the research community. More important, the basic thesis seems eminently sensible: Instead of cataloging the intramural duties of the school administrator or analyzing the constituencies he or she works for, it would be far more productive, so it is argued, to start out by examining directly what an administrator actually does during the work day. Drawing upon the explicitly behavioral sciences, especially anthropology, the modern researcher sets forth to isolate the primordial material out of which an administrator's life is constructed, namely, units of behavior. Once these primary data are accurately set down, they can be sifted, labeled, grouped and collated in such a way as to demonstrate, in vivid behavioral terms, what a school administrator's reponsibilities and constituencies actually are. No more guess work, no more arm-chair speculating from outside the work site. Through this medium we have the raw material for generating a definitively accurate account of what goes on in the act of administering.

In the general management field, Henry Mintzberg is a formidable advocate of this approach, his research yielding a major volume, The Nature of Managerial Work, in 1973.[4] (Using Mintzberg's categories, Chapter IX of the present report compares school principals and managers in the field of business.) In the study of schools and school administration, Ray Rist[5] and Harry Wolcott[6] are among the more prominent ethnographers of the current period.

The present study was designed to advance the work of these scholars by employing the ethnographic mode of investigation, but focusing it on the discretionary areas of administrative decision-making at the school building level. It is our assumption in this investigation that the act of principaling is a decisive dynamic in the success or failure of school system operation. The school principal is education's most visible, "on-line" administrator. More than any other single individual in the American school hierarchy, the principal is the pivotal exchange point, the working broker between teachers and students on the one hand and the political establishment--superintendent, school board, parent and taxpayer--on the other. Through the principal's office pass the problems and decisions which affect not only the general life of the institution but the anxieties and aspirations of each individual living and working within it.

## B. ORIGINS

The study reported in this document originated in bilateral talks between the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle and the Chicago Principals Association, Local 2 of the American Federation of School Administrators. With seed money from the Association, the research team tested data-gathering techniques with field trials in two schools during the spring of 1977. With the techniques proving feasible, the team then obtained the support and collaboration of the Center for Urban Education, a research arm of the Chicago Public Schools. With the patronage of the Spencer Foundation, a Pilot Study was conducted of eight principals during the academic year 1977-78.

With the refinement of the research design, and with the tripartite collaboration of the Chicago Principals Association, the Chicago Public Schools and the University of Illinois, the research team submitted a formal proposal to the National Institute of Education calling for the extensive, in-depth study of sixteen school principals over the course of two school years, 1978-79 and 1979-80. This proposal was approved with the actual funding covering the period January 1979 to July 1980. The present document is a formal report to the National Institute of Education on the major findings of this study.

## C. RESEARCH DESIGN

Selection of the sample--As is well known in the academic community, ethnographic research is extremely time-intensive; it is estimated that each hour of field observation may generate five to eight hours of write-up, coding, analysis, cross-site referencing, and final manuscript writing. Given this condition, the research team was forced to confine the active subjects of the investigation to only sixteen of Chicago's approximately 525 building principals. At the outset, we were interested in a degree of representativeness in our sample which neither the random method nor the hand-picked method could yield. Instead, we opted for a methodology somewhere between these two polar opposites which came to be referred to as the Variables Grid technique. A grid was established in which the following variables were incorporated:

| | |
|---|---|
| Level | Elementary and high schools |
| Type | General, vocational, special purpose schools |
| Enrollment size | Small, medium and large schools |
| Enrollment mobility | Stable (low turnover) and unstable (high turnover) schools |
| Enrollment racial mix | Mostly white, mostly black, balanced, large Hispanic contingent |
| Geography | Distribution among Chicago's primary population/SES sectors |
| Sex of Principal | Male and female principals |
| Race of Principal | White, black, Hispanic principals |
| Length of tenure of principal | Experienced, veteran principals and principals new to the principalship and/or to the school building. |

When all of the schools had been distributed into cells in the grid, we sought the counsel of the then President of the Chicago Principals Association, Mr. Samuel Dolnick. With the insights provided by his wide and detailed knowledge of the Chicago system, we developed a pool of approximately twenty-five principals representative of the above variables. Under the auspices of the Center for Urban Education, we approached our subjects on their willingness to participate in the study, promptly filling our subject complement of sixteen. Recognizing the long history of reclusiveness of the Chicago system going back several decades, we were pleasantly surprised at the openness and ready collaboration of our prospective subjects. Only three turned down the invitation to join the study--one because of impending retirement, a second because of a concurrent run for public office, and a third who was assuming the principalship for the first time and had been assigned to a school with significant community unrest. With the final consent of each nominee's District Superintendent (of Chicago's 27 at that time), the final subject roster was completed.

Data-gathering--Ethnographic techniques require direct observation on the site with the researcher physically present at all times. Accordingly, each of the sixteen principals was personally accompanied by one member of the research team (of four professors) and directly observed on the job for up to twelve working days (not necessarily sequential) during the two school years 1978-80. Typically, the principal's work day begins around 8 a.m. and continues until 3:30 or 4:00 p.m.. In addition, the principal was followed into the late afternoon and evening if he or she were engaged in professional responsibilities related to the principalship. For work taken home for study in the evening and on weekends, we relied on post facto reports from the principals on the extent of this activity.

On the job, during the regular work day, the researcher was privy to all conferences and communications between the principal and those with whom he or she interacted, either face to face or over the telephone. The only exception to this general expectation were those contacts of such a personal or delicate nature that the researcher's presence would constitute an unacceptable disturbance. In such cases, and at the request of the principal, the researcher agreed to absent himself or herself from the interaction. In two years of observation, such preemptions of the data-gathering schedule came to represent less than one percent of the total observation time.

During each day's observation, the researcher kept a detailed, minute-by-minute log of the principal's activities--the nature of the interactions, the subject matter covered, and the linkage of one interaction with the next to record the flow of managerial decision-making. From these field notes, the researcher then prepared a written log, called a "protocol," representing a written version of the principal's day.

These protocols were then analyzed further into separate "events," each event representing an interaction or a piece of business which could be separated out from the surrounding activity. Each event, of whatever duration (from five seconds to two hours) was assigned a number ( a typical work day comprising between 50 and 200 separate events), and coded according to the following characteristics:

--Person with whom the principal is interacting (teacher, student, assistant principal, school nurse, etc.)
--Race and sex of interactor
--Medium of communication (verbal face-to-face, written word, etc.)
--Subject matter of event
--Locus (in school building) of event
--Initiator of event
--Scheduled or spontaneous event
--Duration of event (in minutes)
--Stability or enhancement (whether the event was focused on stabilizing the routings of the school or on changing, modifying or altering the routines)
--Mintzberg classification of event (per H. Mintzberg, The Nature of Managerial Work)[7]

With these analytical characteristics available for each event, the research team then developed summations and collations of the seemingly disparate features of managerial activity. Out of these summaries, it became possible not only to examine a principal's general work profile, but also to compare one principal with another in terms of overall work patterns.

But, behind these general features of principaling activity, the team was specifically interested in discretionary decision-making behavior within the general texture of institutional management. How, that is, does a principal behave when the institution has no routines, no procedures, no regulations to cover managerial phenomena as they unfold hour by hour in the school's flow of business? These are the episodic components of a principal's work day that reveal the most about the job itself; they exhibit how the incumbent perceives his or her role being played out in this setting. These discretionary modes of administrative conduct also serve to illuminate the distinctive features of this specialized form of public administration, showing how it differs from management in business, government, universities, the military, and other institutional environments, both public and private.

The ethnographic mode of investigation is especially suited to the study of these discretionary moments in a principal's work routines. And for this reason--to take maximum advantage of the methodology itself--the research team focused its analytical eye on just those managerial phenomena which call for, indeed require, discretionary conduct. To facilitate the study of these phenomena, we examine the impact of a principal's behavior on four sectors of the human environment:

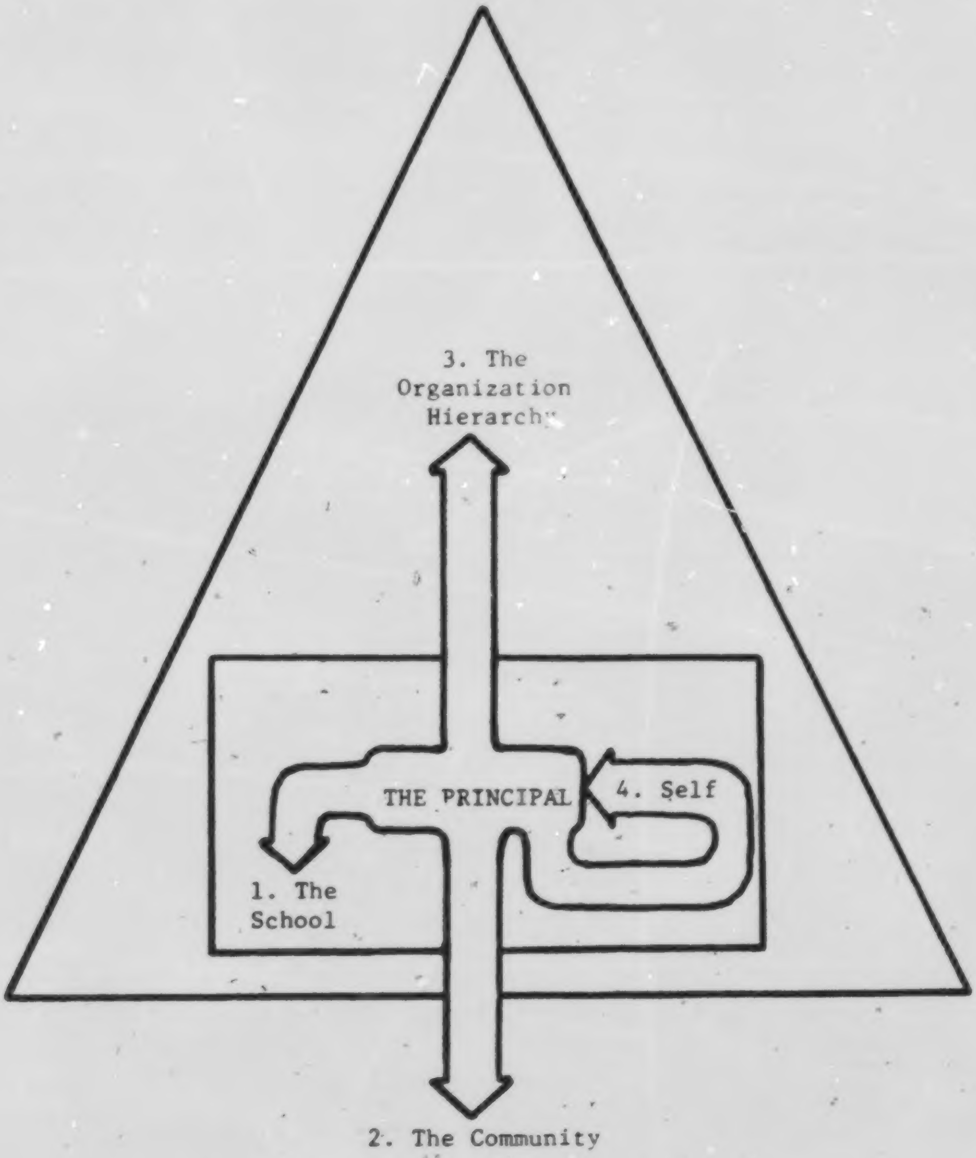
(1) on his or her immediate colleagues and associates,
(2) on laymen outside the school,
(3) on the administrative hierarchy in which he or she serves as a kind of "middle manager," and finally,
(4) on himself or herself as a professional person. (See Figure 1.)

## D. SYSTEM ACCESS AND DESIGN CONTROL

As a research team, the four of us were interested in gaining a fuller, deeper knowledge of the Chicago Public School system, not only to facilitate our data-gathering, but to serve as background out of which we could better understand and evaluate our findings. To this end, we convened a Professional Advisory Committee of 17 members, made up of some participating subjects, other Chicago school principals, district superintendents, and suburban superintendents and principals outside the City of Chicago. This group helped make the study known to their colleagues throughout the metropolitan area, thus providing a preparation for our access to the research sites. The Professional Advisory Committee met three times during the course of the investigation. The roster of the Committee appears in Appendix A.

In attempting to push back the conventional boundaries of ethnographic research and to explore hitherto unreported features of school administration, we were also desirous of having at hand some specialized research advice on the ongoing design of the study. Accordingly, we convened a second group, the Academic Advisory Committee, made up of five scholars in school administration and social science research. This group provided guidance on the overall design of the study and on analytical strategies for processing the data. The Academic Advisory Committee met three times during the course of the study. The roster of this group also appears in Appendix A.

Figure 1--Principaling and Its Four Sectors of Effect


3. The Organization Hierarchy
THE PRINCIPAL
4. Self
1. The School
2. The Community

## E. PLAN OF THE REPORT

As noted earlier, the body of ethnographic literature on school administration is only now beginning to delineate the texture of managerial work in school settings. By way of providing a context in which to place the present study and a base line from which to evaluate our findings, we offer in Chapter II (immediately following) a review of the literature germane to the scope and purpose of our investigation.

Following this review, we present in Chapters III and IV general work profiles of elementary and secondary principals. As noted, our summations of the protocol materials and specifically of the "event analysis summaries" have provided the basic material from which these two chapters have been developed.

In Chapter V through VIII, we focus on the discretionary managerial phenomena discussed above. We devote a chapter each to the four "impact" zones, namely, the impact of the principal's behavior on:

--the school (teachers, staff, and students inside the school building)
--the community (parents and other laymen outside the school)
--the hierarchy (the administrative apparatus established to operate the system in which the principal serves as a "middle manager")
--the principal himself/herself (the personal/professional focus of all human conduct: "How does it affect me?")

Following these analytical chapters, Chapter IX examines the comparison of our findings with those of Henry Mintzberg in the study of business executives. As one of the indirect progenitors of the present investigation and as a leading scholar in the ethnographic method of management study, Mintzberg provides a suitable foil against which to view the findings of this inquiry.

In Chapter X, we focus on an ancillary but abiding concern of all scholars in the educational industry--how does research and development knowledge flow from the producer to the consumer? In this discussion, we examine the degree to which school principals study their own jobs by consulting professional sources on administrative theory and practice. How do principals obtain professional information on principaling? How is this new knowledge incorporated into their managerial work patterns? And what are the effects of this knowledge on the institutions over which they preside?

Finally, in Chapter XI, we draw the threads of this investigation together and bring the story to a close. By focusing on the effects of principaling behavior, we conclude this account with seven general propositions concerning the use of discretionary decision-making at the principalship level of school administration.

Following the formal chapters, the report contains a roster of the advisory committees, together with two work papers which will be of interest to other ethnographic researchers.

## Footnotes

[1] Luther Gulick, "Notes on the Theory of Organization" in L.H. Gulick and L.F. Urwick, eds., Papers on the Science of Administration (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937)

[2] (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960)

[3] Third Edition (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1965)

[4] (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1973)

[5] "Ethnographic techniques and the study of an urban school." Urban Education Vol. 10 (April), pp. 86-108.

[6] The Man in the Principal's Office -- An Ethnography (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973)

[7] Mintzberg isolated ten managerial categories in three clusters--Interpersonal: Figurehead, Leader, Liaison; Informational: Monitor, Disseminator, Spokesman; Decisional: Entrepreneur, Disturbance Handler, Resource Allocator, Negotiator.

# CHAPTER II

# REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## A. BACKGROUND

In view of its importance, the school principalship should be the most thoroughly researched and best understood administrative position in education. Although the literature on the school principal is voluminous, it tends much of the time to be prescriptive and hortatory rather than descriptive and empirical. There is very little research-based knowledge about the dimensions of principal performance; there hasn't even been much attention given, until recently, to the question of what it is that school principals do during their working day. Most importantly, there is little research into the urban principalship concerning its organizational constraints, institutional structures, and environmental complexities.

The present study was intended to improve our understanding of the role by asking what it is that principals spend their time doing and by asking how principals exercise discretion within the large-city organizational environment.

In the following selected review of the relevant literature on the school principalship we seek to throw our research into the context of a rapidly developing interest in the "natural" (i.e., ethnographic-type) investigation of key administrators in education and hopefully add thereby to a developing knowledge about the observed actualities of administrative life in the schools. Our review, following the outline of our report, will first discuss evidence of the principal's work profile and will then review the literature appropriate to an understanding of the strategies and tactics of discretionary decision-making.

## B. THE PRINCIPAL'S WORK PROFILE

Much of our existing knowledge about the school principalship has developed over the years out of investigator interest in either role theory or leadership behavior (See Lipham and Hoeh, 1974). Among some "classic" studies have been: (a) Halpin's (1958) use of a "Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ)" to pursue qualities of "initiating structure" and "consideration" among school principals; (b) the Halpin and Croft research into the "organizational climate" of schools (Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire, 1963); and (c) the Gross and Herriott (1965) investigation of the role of the elementary school principal in influencing teachers.

The emphasis on role theory and leadership in past studies of the school principal may have resulted in a body of literature that has been overly keyed into questions of administrator-teacher interaction, instructional leadership, and school change. It has become a fundamental tenet of the job, that the site-level administrator in education should be "instructional leader" of his or her school (See Jacobson, Logsdon, and Wiegman, 1973; Roe and Drake, 1980; and Lipham and Hoeh, Jr., 1974). What hasn't been clear over the years, however, is whether the on-the-job behavior of the school principal is at all consonant with such a role emphasis.

Within the last few years observational research by Wolcott (1973), Sproull (1977, 1979), Peterson (1978), and Martin (1980) has begun to address the question of how principals do spend their time. Wolcott's initial (1973) study of a single elementary principal has been followed by a number of additional ethnographic-style inquiries (using samples of from two to six principals) that have been much influenced in design by Wolcott as well as by Mintzberg's (1973) study of managerial personnel in a variety of organizational settings. In general, the findings indicate that instructional leadership (i.e., classroom observation, curriculum development, teacher inservice, etc.) is not a central focus of the principalship. Activities that do represent the major commitments of the principal's time are: (a) working with students and with teachers' noninstructional needs (Peterson, 1978); (b) attending to logistics (keeping track of things), external requirements (often imposed by the larger bureaucracy), and social pleasantries (making people feel good) (Sproull, 1977, 1979); and (c) overseeing organizational maintenance, pupil control, and extra-curricular activity involvement (Martin, 1980).

The findings to date indicate furthermore that the school principal's workday (whether elementary or high school, whether city or small town or suburban) is very busy and highly unpredictable. Time usage by the school principal is typically characterized by many activities of very short duration with much variety and many changes of "gears" throughout the school day (Peterson, 1978; Sproull, 1977, 1979; Martin, 1980). The principalship role is also a highly verbal one, with much of the working day spent in locations other than the principal's office and spent reacting or responding to initiatives from other persons (Wolcott, 1973; Sproull, 1977, 1979; Martin, 1980).

The data from the present study, with a larger sample of principals and a different institutional setting (a major-city school system), tend generally to confirm the findings of this previous ethnographic research.

## C. PRINCIPAL'S DISCRETIONARY DECISION-MAKING

Research into the on-the-job usage of the principal's discretionary decision-making power has not been extensive. One initial question is whether the principalship does or does not permit much decision-making latitude. Wolcott (1973) found that the discretionary power of his single subject was quite minimal, concluding:

> For the most part, the exercise of the authority of his office was parcelled out to him policy by policy and directive by directive. His freedom was to make no serious mistakes. (p. 306)

Similarly Rogers (1980), in a quasi-observational study of both elementary and secondary principals from one large-city school system, found that principals generally portray themselves as caught in the middle and "hemmed in" by regulations in having to balance the layers of school system hierarchy up above against the needs of students and desires of the community down below. And, in a survey of fifty-five principals in six states, a team of Rand Corporation researchers (Hill, et al., 1980), found that principals consider themselves to be "more constrained by rules, more subject to public scrutiny, and less in control of their own schedules, than they were five years ago."

On the other hand, Seymour Sarason (1971) found that the authority of the principal's office depended very heavily upon the use that principals were able and willing to make of decision-making opportunities that did exist. Principals do have considerable authority, but differ in their knowledge and appreciation of its utility. Sarason noted that principals in large urban systems very often view the school "system" as a source of never ending obstacles, but very often are quite flexible in interpreting the limits of what "the system" will allow. In a similar vein, Isherwood (1973) concluded from his observation of fifteen secondary school principals that opportunities for the development and exercise of "informal authority" seem to exceed by far the formally designated powers and responsibilities of the principalship.

The present study has focused upon the discretionary strategies and tactics used by principals to implement school district policy--in four arenas of activity. These are: (a) the effects of principaling upon the school site, (b) the effects of principaling upon the surrounding community, (c) the effects of principaling upon the school system hierarchy, and (d) the effects of principaling upon the principal himself. Some previous research relevant to each arena of activity is summarized.

a. The Effects of Principaling on the School--Lortie (1975) has observed that interactions within schools are much greater than interactions across their boundaries and that the principal is of course the key official within each school network. An initial line of research would suggest the importance of the "balancing act" of the principal in working with faculty and staff. In this regard, the principal must seek to balance the expectations and demands of pupils and parents, and the expectations of the organizational hierarchy, against the wishes and expectations of the school staff. Becker (1961) and Barsky (1976) have both concluded that a principal's within-school relations, with teachers and pupils (including parents), are important to his status and authority within the larger school system. Becker found that the principal is expected by his faculty to "back them up" and to respect their "professional independence." If he fails to meet faculty expectations in this role, conflict develops, and when this happens, both teachers and principal are likely to employ a variety of sanctions to control one another's behavior--including, on the part of teachers, threats of, or requests for transfer, the use of connections in the community "to create sentiment against the principal," and the use of contacts elsewhere in the organization to circumvent the principal. Barsky found that beyond "backing the teacher up," a principal adds to his stature by (a) showing interest and offering help in the personal problems of his faculty, (b) offering assistance with individual professional matters, (c) handling personally much of the detail and "paper-work" of the school, and (d) assuming responsibility for pupil discipline and control.

A second line of research has explored the important question of the principal's impact upon school outcomes. McPartland and Karweit (1979) and Wolf (1979) caution that because school differences in general have not been found to account very heavily for variations in student outcome, the separate effect of administrative activity must remain an elusive element. Similarly Deal and Celotti (1977,1980) have suggested that classroom instruction seems to be "virtually unaffected" by organizational and administrative factors. There is little evidence of administrative influence upon the core teaching and learning technology.

However, both Deal and Celotti and Ellett and Walberg (1979) go on to suggest that the school principal can play an important mediating or supportive role--in which aspects of the school atmosphere and matters of morale can be linked with school "effectiveness". Brookover (1977) and Grant (1980) have both explored linkages between site-level administration and school outcomes through the impact of school "climate." Noblit (1978,1979) has conducted comparative, ethnographic case studies of principals' administrative styles, school climates, and youth crime in the high school. Rist (1972) has discussed the role of the principal as a "cultural maximizer" in a single all black, ghetto school. Stoll (1979) compared overachieving and underachieving schools in the state of Florida, in terms of test results in reading, finding that the more effective schools were more likely to have administrators who communicated the importance of reading, worked toward a coordinated reading program, and took steps to provide adequate instructional materials. And, Clark, Lotto and McCarthy (1980), aggregated some ninety-seven studies of urban school achievement, concluding that: (a) site-level leadership is crucial in determining school success; (b) this leadership is typically of an attitudinal and motivational nature (e.g., the creation of an achievement "climate"); (c) successful schools engage in staff development and establish clearly stated goals and objectives; and (d) successful schools have high levels of parent contact and parental involvement.

It is not the purpose of the present study to attempt a linkage between the behavior of the school principal and measures of school "outcomes," nor have we attempted to compare "good" principals with "poor" ones. Our research does, however, indicate that the activity of the principal can affect the work of the school, particularly through an impact upon the atmosphere or "climate" in which teaching and learning take place.

b. The Effects of Principaling on the Community--It would seem that the days of safe encapsulation behind a "four-walls-of-the-school" philosophy are at an end for most school administrators. A "closed-system" view of education's organizational world has been replaced by the realization that the school is necessarily involved fully with its surrounding environment. There has not yet been a great deal or research, however, into the school administrator vis-a-vis the surrounding neighborhood. Pryor, et al. (1980) point out that the school site is the key point of parental and community contact, that satisfaction is sought and problems are raised first at the level of the teacher and the school principal; however, evidence of important, interactive effects between the administrator and the school clientele has not been adequately explored.

One line of investigation has looked into the activities of administrators in "representing" the school system to its community constituency. Mann (1976), for example, has analyzed the differing behavioral styles of principals in terms of their "predominating orientation" to the community (e.g., as "trustees,""delegates," or"politicos"). Both Mann and Summerfield (1971) found that the school principal's representational role combines characteristics of style and "situation." Differences in the principal's personality are joined by differences in community organization, differences in the saliency of local issues, and differences in parental perception and expectation--in affecting the attitude that the principal takes toward the community constituency.

Recent research has explored the representational role of the principal within a framework of clientele accommodation that has been labeled a "theory of street-level bureaucracy" (See Lipsky, 1976). Weatherley (1979) for example, studied the site-level implementation of special education in Massachusetts--finding that "front-line administrators" were continually faced with a conflict betweenn the requirements of the law and the insufficiency of local resources (including time) needed to apply the law. It became necessary, in the face of resource constraints, to ration and routinize services, to short-circuit the bureaucratic requirements for child review and child-parent protection, and to develop "tricks" which facilitated client compliance. Weatherley concludes: "Front-line personnel, street-level bureaucrats as I have called them, unintentionally but effectively 'make' policy through their responses to the multiple demands placed on them. This street-level policy delivered to the public is at variance with formal or official policy reflected in law, regulations, and procedures" (Weatherley, p. 140). Similarly, Crowson and Porter-Gehrie (1980) have discussed the coping mechanisms used by principals to balance such clientele needs as parental expectation, school disciplinary control, and enrollment demand against the policies, rules, and procedures of the central school organization. From a different point of view, Wolcott (1973) has suggested that the principal's representational role may frequently exhibit an important "interface" function between the school system bureaucracy and its client community--using the power of the principal position to soften organizational "insensitivity" in place of a "human" sensitivity of the principal's own. (Wolcott, p. 320).

A second line of investigation has explored the role of the site-level administrator in "representing" the community constituency to the school system. This research, identifiable as an inquiry into the "boundary-spanning" behavior of school principals (Moore, 1975) treats the activity of the school principal in somewhat more "middle management" terms--that is, in consideration of the administrator's relationship to both the outside environment and the expectations of the school hierarchy up above. Peterson (1976) has suggested that it is the building principal who has been most affected by the press of community interests and expectations. As one moves up the organizational hierarchy, resistance to sharing power with outsiders grows (Peterson, p. 226). It is the principal who is expected to be most responsive to the organization's clientele, to be "open" to the community, and to implement guidelines for parental advisement. While community involvement is highly valued bureaucratically, the site-level administrator who fails, however, to buttress the larger organization sufficiently from clientele demands or who used parental assistance too conspicuously to serve his own school program is not well appreciated by hierarchical superiors (Rogers, 1968). Thus research evidence to date suggests that principals are prone to protect the school from parental pressure, to channel parent demands into non-threatening arenas of involvement, and to resist community access to essential and critical activities (Rist, 1972; Steinberg, 1975; Davies, et al., 1978; Noblit, 1979).

c. The Effects of Principaling on the Hierarchy--Recent analysis has characterized educational organizations as loosely-coupled and ambiguous in design and procedure (Weick, 1976, 1980; March and Olsen, 1976; Sproull, et al., 1978). This perspective has much influenced a renewed research interest in the internal characteristics of school systems as organizations and in the outcomes or products of organizational procedures. The traditional bureaucratic model as a point of departure in teaching and learning about school administration is under question, as revisionist interpretations of the organizational environment claim that assumptions of hierarchical systems of communication and command, of shared goals and values, of rationally distributed systems of responsibility and authority, and even commonalities of organizational culture--are not in touch with reality.

With this more loosely-coupled interpretation of organizational reality, the investigation of the behaviors of key sub-units, in relation to the rest of the organization, assumes much saliency. An initial line of investigation to date has focused upon the nature of "linkages" between school site-level administrators and hierarchical superiors. Hannaway and Sproull (1979), for example, found that relatively little of the working day of each "level" of organizational participant was in response to the coordination and control activities of the other. Both site-level and upper level managers furthermore spent very little of their time coordinating and controlling the "core" tasks of the organization, curriculum and instruction. The authors concluded that within the loosely coupled environment of education organizations, "...the activities of management seem to be only marginally related to the production (e.g., student learning) activities of schools (Hannaway and Sproull, p. 4)

In further exploration into processes and dynamics of interaction between principals and the larger school system, McPherson, Salley, and Baehr (1975) noted that although, as Sarason claims, principals are very much affected by the "system" in which they work, they nevertheless are able, individually, to adapt their own administrative roles to varying conditions of employment and circumstance. Barsky (1975) found (in his case study of a single, large-city principal) that the principal's "knowledge of how the system functions," his grasp of the "informal organization" (e.g., knowing central office secretaries and administrative assistants on a first-name basis), and his understanding of the organizational reward system (e.g., conforming to the central office stress upon accurate records)--permitted the principal considerable flexibility and many opportunities for an "adroit manipulation" of the school system bureaucracy (Barsky, pp. 120-143).

A second approach to the principal's relationship with the school system hierarchy has sought the identification of organizational variables and organizational "constraints" which affect the principalship. Rogers (1968), in a highly critical investigation into organizational constraints upon administrative behavior in the New York City Schools, suggested that city school systems may be even more encumbered than most organizations with rules and standard formulas. He described the effects of an "overcentralization of decisions" and a "proliferation of specialized administrative units" upon the flexibility and managerial capability of local school staffs. He claimed that an over-reliance upon procedural guidelines and outdated S.O.P.'s resulted in long delays in securing needed school services, led to major entanglements in developing new or unusual school programs, and yielded large gaps between "headquarters" understandings and the demands of local school conditions (Rogers, pp. 271-285). Gross and Herriott (1965) found that the principal's ability to provide "leadership" in his school was constrained by such organizationally-related factors as (a) the strength of the principal's immediate superior, (b) the procedures used by the school system to select and allocate school staffs, (c) the school system's "rewards" structure, and (d) school size. In a larger, national study of "what it is that principals do," McPherson, Salley, and Baehr (1976) noted that in describing "key dimensions" of the principal's job there were varying institutional, collegial, and community factors (differing conditions of operation) to which principals needed to adapt. Organizational structure variables (e.g., the size of the school system, the size of each school, the number of grade levels in a school) were found to be particularly important in constraining and influencing the work of the principal.

d. The Effects of Principaling on the Principal--Pohland and Higbee (1979) conducted a content analysis of formal job descriptions for principals from 69 local school districts. The results were compared with data from a similar study conducted by Wang (1931), some forty-eight years earlier. It was discovered that the expected duties of the principalship have not changed much in nearly fifty years.

Recent investigation would suggest, however, that while role expectations have remained relatively unchanged, the realities of job performance for principals have changed. King (1980), for example, argues that the legal status of the principal has been much altered in the recent past by many new judicial decisions and legislative mandates. The principal's role has been particularly affected by students' due process rights, by the increasing specialization of professional personnel within the school, and by the increased attention given to school site improvement. Similarly, Hill, Wuchitech, and Williams (1980) surveyed the effects of federal education programs on school principals--arguing that as a consequence of federal initiatives there is now much more paperwork for the principal, many more rules to contend with, and much more complexity to the job. Finally, Mitchell, et al., (1980) have studied the impact of collective bargaining activities upon upper and lower level managers in eight local school districts, in two states. Their research suggests that collective bargaining has led to a modification of the authority available to school principals. Central office administrators are sensitive to the potential problems caused by variations in contract interpretation and application, and therefore stress a good deal of uniformity. Principals must balance the pressure for uniformity from above with the need to treat individual situations at the local level as they arise. This combination of a demand for uniformity and the need to maintain opportunities for local flexibility results, claim the authors, in a condition where "...many principals are becoming more emotionally isolated in their jobs, feeling that they are less able to bring off an effective personal relationship with teachers and also less able to feel like they are really a part of the administrative 'team'" (pp. 16-17).

## D. SUMMARY

With initiatives provided by Wolcott (1973) and by Mintzberg (1973), there has been a developing research interest in "what it is that principals do"--as an important step toward a better understanding of the principalship role, the constraints accompanying the principal's role, and the opportunities for improved training programs for the principalship. Our present study parallels and extends other, recent investigations of the principalship that have been conducted in a variety of settings--asking how and where principals spend their time, with whom they interact and about what, and asking what kinds of responsibilities and activities are most characteristic of the large-city principalship.

The present study also extends a developing research interest into the question of discretionary behavior and how such behavior affects the school, the community, the school system hierarchy, and the nature of the principalship itself. Research to date has been concentrated upon the within-school relations between teachers and principals, upon the principal's potential impact upon school outcomes, upon the "representational" role of the principal between school and community, upon linkages that connect site-level administrators with hierarchical superiors, and upon organizational variables and constraints that seem to affect the principalship. In contrast the present study examines all of those areas but focuses on those situations and circumstances in which discretionary decision-making is predominant.

## References

Barsky, H., "The Political Style of an Urban Principal: A Case Study," Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1975.

Becker, H.S., "The Teacher in the Authority System of the Public School," Complex Organizations Amitai Etzioni (Ed.), (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961).

Brookover, W. et al., Schools Can Make a Difference (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University, 1977).

Clark, D.L., Lotto, L.S., and McCarthy, M.M., "Factors Associated with Success in Urban Elementary Schools," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 61, No. 7 (March 1980): 467-470.

Crowson, R.L. and Porter-Gehrie, C. "The Discretionary Behavior of Principals in Large-City Schools," Educational Administration Quarterly, Vol. 16, No. 1, (Winter, 1980): 45-69.

Davies, D., et al., Sharing the Power? A Report on the Status of School Councils in the 1970's. (Boston, Mass.: Institute for Responsive Education, 1978).

Deal, T.E. and Celotti, L.D., "How Much Influence Do (and Can) Educational Administrators Have on Classrooms?" Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 61, No. 7 (March 1980): 471-473.

Deal, T.E. and Celotti, L.D., "Loose Coupling and School Administrators: Some Recent Research Findings," Center for Educational Research, Stanford, 1977.

Ellett, C.D. and Walberg, H.J., "Principals' Competency, Environment, and Outcomes," Educational Environments and Effects (Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Corp., 1979): 140-164.

Grant, G. "What Makes a Good School? The New Policy in Education,: Paper presented at AERA, Boston, April, 1980.

Gross, Neal and Herriott, Robert E., Staff Leadership in Public Schools (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965).

Halpin, Andrew W. and Croft, Donald B., "The Organizational Climate of Schools," Administrator's Notebook XI, No. 7 (March, 1963).

Hannaway, J. and Sproull, L.S. "Who's Running the Show? Coordination and Control in Educational Organizations," Administrator's Notebook XXVII, No. 9 (1978-79): 1-4

Hill, P., Wuchitech, J., and Williams, R., "The Effects of Federal Education Programs on School Principals," A Rand Note Prepared for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, February, 1980).

Isherwood, E.B., "The Principal and his Authority: An Empirical Study," High School Journal 56 (March 1973), pp.291-303.

Jacobson, P.B., Logsdon, J.D., and Wiegman, R.R. The Principalship: New Perspectives (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

Kerchner, C.T., Mitchell, D., Erck, W., and Pryor, G. "Labor Relations and the Muddling of School Governance" a Preliminary Research Report, Labor Relations Research Project, Claremont Graduate School, February, 1980.

King, R.A. "The Principal and the Law," Administrator's Notebook, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1979-80): 1-4.

Lipham, James M. and Hoeh, James A., Jr., The Principalship: Foundations and Functions (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

Lipsky, M. "Toward a Theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy," in Willis D. Hawley, et. al., (eds. , Theoretical Perspectives on Urban Politics (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976).

Lortie, D., Schoolteacher (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1975).

Mann, D. The Politics of Administrative Representation (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1976).

March, J.E. and Olsen, J.P. Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations (Bergen, Norway Universitetsforlagets, 1976).

Martin, W.J. "The Managerial Behavior of High School Principals," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, 1980.

McPartland, J.M. and Karweit, N. "Research on Educational Effects," Educational Environments and Effects, H.J. Walberg (ed.), (Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Corp., 1979): 140-164.

McPherson, R.B., Salley, C., and Baehr, M.E., A National Occupational Analysis of the School Principalship (Chicago: Industrial Relations Center, The University of Chicago, 1975).

Mintzberg, H. The Nature of Managerial Work (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

Moore, M.T., "The Boundary-Spanning Role of the Urban School Principal," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1975.

Noblit, G.W., "The Control of Schools: Principals, Climates, and Crime," Paper presented at AERA, San Francisco, April 1979.

Peterson, K.D., "The Principal's Tasks," Administrators Notebook, Vol. 26, No. 8 (1977-78): 1-4.

Peterson, P.E. School Politics Chicago Style (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976).

Pohland, P.A. and Higbie, V.L. "Formal Expectations and the Principalship," Paper presented at the annual meeting of American Educational Research Association (AERA), San Francisco, April, 1979.

Pryor, G., Kerchner, C., Mitchell, D., and Erck, W., "The Logic of Citizen Participation in Public School Collective Bargaining," A Preliminary Research Report, Labor Relations Research Project, Claremont Graduate School, February, 1980.

Rist, R.C., "On the Role of Principal as 'Cultural Maximizer' in an Urban Black School," ERIC, 1972.

Roe, W.H. and Drake, T.L. The Principalship, 2nd edition (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980).

Rogers, D., 110 Livingston Street (New York: Vintage Books, 1968).

Rogers, K.S. "Principals Discuss Their Roles: An Observational Study," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Boston, April, 1980.

Sarason, B., The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971).

Sproull, L.S. "Managerial Attention in New Education Programs: A Micro-Behavioral Study of Program Implementation," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1977.

Sproull, L. "Managing Education Programs: A Micro-Behavioral Analysis, unpublished paper, 1979.

Sproull, L., Weiner S., and Wolf, D. Organizing an Anarchy: Belief, Bureaucracy and Politics in the National Institute of Education (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978).

Steinberg, L.S. "The Role of Extra-Local Interest Groups in School Policy and Implementation." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April, 1975.

Stoll, L.S. "Reading Program Administration: Does it Make a Difference?" Administrator's Notebook, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1978-79): 1-4

Summerfield, H.L. The Neighborhood-Based Politics of Education (Columbus, Ohio:Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1971).

Wang, F.L. "Duties of Principals as Revealed through School Board Rules," Unpublished masters thesis, Chicago: Department of Education, University of Chicago, 1931 as cited by Jacobson, P.B. and Reavis, W.C. in Duties of School Principals (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1941).

Weatherley, R.A. Reforming Special Education: Policy Implementation from State Level to Street Level (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1979).

Weick, K.E. "Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems," Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 21, No. 1, (March 1976):1-19

Wolcott, H.F. The Man in the Principal's Office (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973).

Wolf, R.M. "Achievements in the United States," Educational Environments and Effects, H.J. Walberg (ed.), (Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Corp., 1979): 313-330.

# PART TWO

# THE PRINCIPAL'S WORK PROFILE

# CHAPTER III

# THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL

## A. INTRODUCTION

Elementary schools in Chicago vary in size--from 200-300 pupils to over 1500. For the most part, they are neighborhood schools, serving youngsters within walking distance, although some busing is provided for students living at greater distances or attending special programs. These schools typically comprise the conventional grades of K through 8; in some situations, elementary schools are linked with middle schools or are associated with satellite branches serving specific grade levels.

The Chicago principal typically begins his or her administrative career in a small school at the elementary level, gradually working up to larger and more complicated assignments as the career advances. The larger schools are assigned one or two assistant principals; especially is this the case when a given principal has jurisdiction over a branch building in addition to the main building.

As noted in Chapter I, the original target pool consisted of sixteen schools whose principals were to serve as subjects of the study. Of the sixteen, nine were elementary schools (later reduced to eight when fieldwork logistics required a tightening of schedules), six were secondary schools and one was a special school for the handicapped serving all age groups.

The elementary schools chosen for on-site visits were drawn from the Variables Grid described in Chapter I. Principals were selected to exhibit a variety of subject and site categories. The seven principals in the elementary sample include three males and four females. Racially, three are black, three white, and one Hispanic. Three were newly assigned to their schools within the year preceding the observation, two were recently assigned during the preceding two years, and two had been at their schools for more than four years.

The schools studied range in size from very small (under 300 pupils) to large (over 1600 pupils). They include a branch site where one principal is assigned to both a medium sized school (900 pupils) and an additional smaller school a few miles away. Most schools in the sample include students from kindergarten through the eighth grade. Student bodies in the sample include those which are mostly black, mostly white, and racially diverse. The schools studied are geographically distributed on the south, north and west sides of the city.

During the period of this study, several innovative programs and curriculum changes were introduced into the Chicago Public Schools. The sites selected provided observation of principals' experience with these new programs. Some changes affected all schools. In particular, the traditional grading/grouping system of first through eighth grades was replaced by a system which groups students by achievement levels. A curriculum which the central administration dubbed "continuous progress" was introduced in reading and mathematics. An innovation based on mastery learning concepts and individualized instruction, this system requires every teacher to test students regularly in mastery skills and to maintain extensive records (reported every ten weeks) on student scores on criterion referenced tests.

In addition to these general changes, two other new programs served to change the character of the schools selected for study. One school was officially designated a Title I school and enjoyed the injection of a quarter of a million federal dollars worth of programs and facilities in a single year. Two other schools were converted from small, neighborhood schools to elementary magnet schools. Designed to attract a racially mixed student body from a wide geographic area, these magnets offered a specialized curriculum to students with above-average academic credentials.

The final elementary sample consisted of eight schools with the number of observation days and part-days totaling 69. Of this number, 52 days of observation in seven schools were considered representative of the total and were analyzed in detail. In all, the research team logged over 300 hours of observation at elementary school sites.

## B. A GENERIC PROFILE

As noted in Chapter I, the research plan was designed to identify the primordial elements in principaling activity, namely behavioral events. In this context, an event may be defined as a piece of managerial business which, for the sake of analysis, may be separated out from surrounding activity and examined from a number of different standpoints:

-- with whom was the principal interacting?
-- what medium of communication was employed in the interaction?
-- where physically (in the building or elsewhere) did the interaction take place?
-- which party, the principal or another, initiated the interaction?
-- what was the duration, in minutes, of the interaction?

A typical school day for the principal may consist of anywhere from fifty to over one hundred of these events. Of course, they all run together, and it is sometimes difficult to determine when one managerial activity comes to a close and another begins. In providing as accurate an account as possible of principaling behavior, we believe the separation of managerial events has been successful. We present in the following sections the results of our analysis.

## 1. Interaction Pairings

Most of a principal's work day consists in interacting with other people. In total, our elementary principals spent 83 percent of their work time in this activity. Table I presents the distribution of these contacts, together with the range of the seven principals.

As a group, our subjects spent more time interacting with students than with any other role category. Most of this time was spent supervising student movement or engaging in conferences with students who had caused a disturbance in class or on the playground. Principals spending the most time with students did so because they handled all the routine disciplinary cases themselves rather than referring them to an assistant (35 percent), because they had a special tutoring project with students that lasted nearly an hour each day (30 percent), or by virtue of being fully accessible to students, with no clerk or receptionist buffering the principal's office from the corridor (23 percent). One principal had little contact with students, apparently due to personal preference. This subject knew few students by name and did not interact with students often (14 percent). The principals with the least amount of student contact had assistants who were freed-up from other duties in order to handle discipline referrals. Such principals typically became involved with students only in potentially explosive circumstances, in supervising student movement in hallways, or in giving awards and other recognition for special achievement (8 and 13 percent).

The second most frequent interaction concerned contacts with others or the researchers, accounting for 19 percent of the principal's time. About one-fourth of these interactions were with individuals other than the researcher. Such conversations were often lengthy because outsiders require explanations of school policy, of organization procedures and of bureaucratic routines. Also, the principal typically handled these situations personally from start to finish to be sure that they were properly taken care of. In one case, a newspaper photographer showed up after a school assembly had been completed. The principal, wanting pictures for the local papers, spent nearly half an hour calling students from their classes to the stage where they, once again in costumes, would recreate their portions of the program for the photographer.

Contacts with the researcher, which constituted about 14 percent of principaling time, were comprised of (a) briefing sessions early in the observation in which the principal was acquainting the newcomer with the site, (b) spontaneous commentaries by the principal explaining certain events, and (c) longer conversations in which the principal used the researcher as a friendly sounding board for the expression of his or her inner reflections on the job. These interactions provided the researcher an opportunity to obtain the principal's point of view on previously observed events and to catch up on happenings at the school between observations. The relationship that developed between the researcher

## TABLE I

## Interaction Pairings

(Drawn from 69 days or part-days of observation)

| Principal interacted with: | Minutes | Percent | Range of percent | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Low | High |
| Student | 2966 | 22 | 8 | 35 |
| Others (incl. researcher) | 2538 | 19 | 17 | 29 |
| Faculty member | 2435 | 18 | 10 | 24 |
| Office clerk | 1036 | 8 | 6 | 10 |
| Parent/guardian | 994 | 7 | 2 | 12 |
| District superintendent | 891 | 7 | 1 | 10 |
| Other principals | 547 | 4 | 1 | 7 |
| Assistant principal | 497 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Central office staff | 478 | 4 | 1 | 11 |
| Teacher aide | 374 | 3 | 0 | 9 |
| Adjustment teacher | 219 | 2 | 0 | 8 |
| Building engineer | 168 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Social worker/nurse | 106 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Community official/police | 62 | .5 | 0 | 2 |
| Security personnel | 53 | .5 | 0 | 3 |
| | 13,364 | 101* | | |

---

*Due to rounding errors.

and subject during these conversations seemed to put the principals' at ease and to open access to events that otherwise may have been guarded or excluded from observation.

In one case, however, the time spent conversing with the researcher climbed out of control. This principal was in the midst of a series of extremely difficult professional confrontations (court cases, faculty-union grievances, parent pressure groups). This principal's day was nearly dominated with meetings pertinent to this turmoil. Precisely because of the emotional intensity of these events, the principal enjoyed talking with the researcher, explaining what had happened, offering the principal's interpretation of events, and seeking (from the researcher, a neutral observer) confirmation and reassurance. The extreme nature of this particular situation made it necessary to remove these data from this analysis. It is important to realize, however, that conflict can escalate until it fills all of an administrator's time. Most principals are aware of this, and have a reserve of strategies that help them cool out and diffuse conflict before it monopolizes all their time and energy.

The third most frequent interaction was with faculty members. These would include faculty conferences, hearing teachers' requests, giving directions, seeking reactions, and friendly conversation. The principal with the most faculty interaction was a newly assigned principal who was receiving a large number of disciplinary referrals from teachers. This principal felt that the faculty was using the referrals to "test" her, their new superior. The principal was on the defensive, carefully making a written record of each referral and administrative action, following up with a conference with the referring teacher, and filing a written record of the conference. The principal with the least faculty interaction was responsible for two schools, thus being forced to divide principaling time between two campuses with correspondingly reduced opportunity for interaction with each of the two faculties. In this situation, faculty at both schools relayed requests and other information through administrative assistants at each school. The principal also issued regular and lengthy bulletins to both faculties to communicate information that might otherwise have been communicated orally. Finally, the pressure of time on this principal meant that informal conversation with staff had to be brief. In the principal's office there prevailed a brisk and businesslike atmosphere during individual conferences.

In most schools the headquarters area was physically divided into an outer office where the school clerk, secretaries and administrative aides were quartered, and a principal's inner office which could be opened to the outer activity or closed off for privacy. Most principals kept their doors to the outer office open and kept an ear cocked for eavesdropping on the routine business that the office customarily handled. Typically, clerks (a) took charge of the arrival and assignment of substitute teachers, (b) greeted parents and other visitors, (c) ministered to the needs of ill and injured students by examining them and calling their homes, (d) greeted disciplinary referrals, instructing them whom to see and where to wait, (e) gave information to faculty, and (f) made appointments to see the principal. The clerk would frequently enter the principal's inner office to give an update on who had stopped by, when they would return, who was waiting to see the principal, who had gone home, and who was going where and for how long. The percentage of time devoted to these exchanges with the clerk constituted 9 percent of the principal's time, spread in small units of a few minutes each throughout the day.

The amount of time principals spent with parents was almost completely devoted to conferences. Frequently these concerned student misbehavior. In a few cases they centered around complaints by parents of a teacher, of other students, or of a school regulation.

In relating to their superiors, some principals work with their district superintendent directly, while others work with the administrative staff downtown or in the district office. One principal spent only 2 percent of the time interacting with the district superintendent, but 11 percent with headquarters staff. Another spent 14 percent interacting with the district superintendent, but only 0.3 percent with central staff.

Our data revealed that principals spent little time interacting with other principals. When they did, the conversation usually had to do with an exchange of information about how to respond to a directive, to learn about a meeting of the principal's professional organization, or to ask a favor (i.e., to acquire a few extra report cards or to borrow a curriculum guidebook). In one case, a principal's contact with fellow principals was increased through service on committees appointed by the district superintendent (5 percent). Another principal seemed to enjoy calling his colleagues, passing the time of day and either seeking information or extending resources to his colleagues (7 percent).

Most principals had little contact with teacher aides. An exception was a black principal who made extensive use of a white community aide to establish relationships with white parents who had initially opposed the appointment of a black principal; these interactions comprised 9 percent of this principal's work time. Coordinately, this principal had very little direct contact with parents during the first year at the school (2 percent). A similar situation arose in a black neighborhood where a white principal used a black assistant principal as a conduit for communicating with predominantly black parents and students. This principal devoted more than 11 percent of the time to interactions with the assistant.

## 2. Initiatory Behavior

Table II provides a distribution of interaction time related to

## TABLE II

## Initiatory Behavior

(Drawn from 69 days or part-days of observation)

| Interchange initiated by: | Minutes | Percent | Range of percent Low | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Low | High |
| Principal | 11,192 | 70 | 51 - | 76 |
| District Superintendent | 800 | 5 | 0 - | 14 |
| Faculty member | 755 | 5 | 3 - | 7 |
| Parent/guardian | 668 | 4 | 1 - | 8 |
| Researcher | 646 | 4 | 1 - | 13 |
| Student | 445 | 3 | 0 - | 6 |
| Office clerk | 428 | 3 | 2 - | 6 |
| Central office staff | 396 | 3 | .5 - | 16 |
| Other principals | 200 | 1 | 0 - | 4 |
| Teacher aide | 169 | 1 | 0 - | 4 |
| Assistant principal | 133 | 1 | 0 - | 2 |
| Adjustment teacher | 122 | 1 | 0 - | 3 |
| Building engineer | 52 | .5 | 0 - | 2 |
| Social worker/nurse | 50 | .5 | 0 - | 2 |
| Community official/police | 2 | - | - | - |
| | 16,058 | 102* | | |

---

*Rounding errors

the initiator of the contact. Over two-thirds of the principal's interaction time was devoted to contacts that he or she initiated (70 percent). Five percent of the time was devoted to interactions initiated by the principal's immediate superior, the district superintendent. Headquarters staff in the central office account for an additional three percent. Two principals exhibited relatively low initiating behavior (51 and 56 percent). In both of these cases, their superiors at district and headquarters level were correspondingly more evident as initiators--one with the district superintendent initiating interaction time of 14 percent, the other with the headquarters personnel initiating interaction time covering 16 percent.

Faculty members, it should be pointed out, initiate many interactions, but tend to do so while the principal is on the run--in the corridors or between regularly scheduled meetings. These exchanges are typically transacted in brief bursts and do not therefore log in at a large percentage of interaction minutes. In contrast, parent-initiated exchanges often stem from a concern or complaint about the school or its personnel. As such, these can blow up into administrative crises if not quickly defused. Parent-initiated exchanges are infrequent, but when one does occur the principal will spend extended stretches of time to calm a parent and establish a cooperative rapport. Most principals know that merely giving a parent a chance to sound off is often all it takes to neutralize hostility and disarm the angry mother or father.

### 3. Medium of Communication

Table III provides a time distribution of events employing different modes of communication. Verbal communication, either face-to-face or by telephone, represents the primary medium of contact (74 percent). For the most part, these interactions are brief. Two principals are representative: the average length of face-to-face contacts for one is 3 minutes 12 seconds (3:12) and for the other one minute 45 seconds (1:45). Telephone interactions for these two principals averaged out at 2 minutes 54 seconds (2:54) and 2 minutes 12 seconds (2:12), respectively. For the entire sample, the average duration of a verbal interaction was under 4 minutes. A few, lengthy interactions of 15,27 and 105 minutes were recorded, but they were conspicuous by their rarity.

Principals make little use of the public address system (0.5 percent). When it is employed, principals either make general announcements (reminding teachers to send student council representatives for a meeting in five minutes) or call a specific student from a class.

The time used by the principal for visual surveys of the school (14 percent) is represented by touring through the hallways, supervising the exits and entrances, cruising the playground, or observing teachers in classrooms.

## TABLE III

### Medium of Communication

(Drawn from 69 days or part-days of observation)

| Medium | Minutes | Percent | Range in Percent | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Low | High |
| Verbal, face-to-face | 10,235 | 66 | 51 - | 78 |
| Visual (eyeballing the environment) | 2166 | 14 | 6 - | 27 |
| Written (reading and writing) | 1837 | 12 | 2 - | 26 |
| Verbal, telephone | 1194 | 8 | 5 - | 12 |
| Verbal, P.A. system | 69 | .5 | 0 - | 1 |
| | 15,501 | 100.5[*] | | |

---

[*] Rounding errors

The principals in the sample devoted about 12 percent of their time to written work. This consisted of writing notes to teachers, reading reports from district and central headquarters, preparing brief notices for the teachers' bulletin board, and filling out the never-ending river of official forms.

Considerable variation among principals is reflected in the range for each medium-of-communication category. The principal with the least face-to-face verbal contact (51 percent) is also the principal with the most visual communication (27 percent). This principal spends the entire lunch hour each day supervising students in the lunchroom. Most of the other principals devoted the lunch hour to informal face-to-face conversation with their colleagues, either having lunch with faculty in the lunchroom or eating in their offices as faculty members drop by to see them.

### 4. Locus of Events

Table IV provides a distribution of principaling time conducted in different parts of the school building or off school grounds. The elementary principal, like his or her secondary counterpart (see Chapter IV), spends less than half the work day in the principal's office (48 percent). When this total is added to time spent in the outer office and other administrative offices in the school, we see that the principal is physically present in the headquarters area about 58 percent of the time.

It is evident that the principal moves about the premises of the school building constantly, spending 11 percent of the time in the corridors, 9 percent in classrooms, and 13 percent at other sites outside the headquarters suite.

Eleven percent of elementary principaling time is spent off the school grounds entirely. One principal who was away from the site a great deal (18 percent) seemed to seek out tasks that would require leaving the building. For example, this principal personally drove a car to the district office in order to hand-deliver reports and other documents, and before returning, purchased school supplies from a nearby discount stationery store. This principal also spent the most time supervising students in the hallways, the lunchroom, playground and auditorium (where movies are shown), and correspondingly the least time in the inner office (30 percent). This particular principal represented an extreme form of "away-from-the-desk" style of management, spending most of the work day supervising students, conducting disciplinary conferences at the site of the "crime," or personally running school errands to distant points.

Principals did not always use the same location to accomplish the same tasks. During bad weather, for example, a variety of supervision

## TABLE IV

## Locus of Event

(Drawn from 69 days or part-days of observation)

| Locus | Minutes | Percent | Range in percent<br>Low | Range in percent<br>High |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inner office | 7704 | 48 | 30 | 56 |
| Off school grounds | 1756 | 11 | 0 | 22 |
| Corridor | 1731 | 11 | 4 | 17 |
| Classroom | 1399 | 9 | 3 | 12 |
| Outer office | 1313 | 8 | 2 | 15 |
| Lunchroom | 606 | 4 | 0 | 9 |
| Auditorium | 464 | 3 | 0 | 11 |
| Faculty lounge, restroom,etc. | 397 | 3 | 0 | 11 |
| Other administrative offices | 336 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| Playground | 292 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| Gymnasium | 89 | .5 | 0 | 2 |
| Library | 45 | .5 | 0 | 3 |
|  | 16,132 | 102* |  |  |

---

*Rounding errors

strategies were developed to control students during recess or lunch periods. One principal sent students to their classrooms for indoor recess, and patrolled the corridors peeking into classrooms. Another supervised indoor recess in the auditorium where students went to read books after eating. Yet another principal led students in a game of BINGO after the tables in the lunchroom had been cleared.

* * *

We can see in the above tabular material a generic profile of the elementary principal at work. We turn now to a single principal's work day as a prototype of the principal's daily encounter with the managerial environment.

## C. A DAY IN THE LIFE...

When Mary Stewart arrived at Blaire Elementary School at 8:15 a.m., the teachers were stopping by the office to sign in on their way to their classrooms. Stewart removed her coat and boots, hanging them in the closet outside her office. She put on a pair of medium heeled shoes, explaining to the researcher,"...the children like to see the principal a little dressed up." Joining her clerk in the outer office, the two of them reviewed the list of teachers who would be absent and the steps to be taken to secure substitutes. One substitute, sent by the central office "Sub Center" had already arrived, and Stewart asked the clerk to give her the regular teacher's file containing a class seating chart and lesson plans.

Returning to her desk, Stewart's eyes drifted to the Continuous Progress Program packet and accompanying memorandum from district offices which had arrived the previous afternoon. It was a reminder that the next reporting period was imminent and that all forms must be filed this coming Friday before the close of business. This meant that Stewart would be spending part of each of the next three days buttonholing the teachers to get their reports to her on each child, and then summarizing these figures in an all-school report. Stewart anticipated that she would have to divert some time from other managerial duties to get this paperwork finished on time.

As she reviewed her calendar, Stewart mentally prepared for a meeting with faculty representatives of the Professional Problems Committee. The Union contract provided that this group, elected by the teachers, must meet regularly with the principal. At 8:30, Stewart left her office for the short walk to the school library, where the committee members were gathering. Stewart called the meeting to order about 8:35. High on her list of items was the matter of selecting textbooks for next year. But before this discussion got underway, the teachers wanted to relay questions to Stewart that individual teachers had raised with them: a problem in supervising the third floor washrooms, a question about how next year's faculty advisor to the eighth grade graduating class was to be selected, and a problem in getting supplies during a particular free period when the office clerk was often not available. After promising to work on these problems, Stewart spent most of the remaining time discussing plans with the teachers to host upcoming meetings with publisher representatives. Together they also reviewed plans to form faculty textbook review committees, and procedures for selecting a common textbook for each grade level.

After the meeting, Stewart was approached by two teachers with individual questions. Miss La Pointe wanted to know whether Stewart would be available during eighth period. Stewart nodded and invited her to stop by the office at that time. Mr. Fields, the gym teacher, informed her that the basketball team did well at yesterday's game. They came close to beating Doyle, which is one of the best teams in the district. Stewart congratulated him, and took the opportunity to ask how Marvin Goth was behaving in class lately. Fields said that Marvin still got "edgy," but in general was "doing a lot better."

As Stewart walked through the hallway back to her office, Mrs. Noyes motioned to her from inside the classroom. The students were already in their classrooms or moving quickly through the halls in the last moments before the class bell rang. Noyes told Stewart that she was scheduled to take the students on a field trip this morning, but that one of the parents had called at the last moment to say that she would not be able to come. This left Noyes one parent volunteer short. Should she cancel the trip? Stewart remembered that Mrs. Case would be volunteering in the reading center this morning. She offered to ask her if she would fill in.

On the way to the reading center, Stewart peeked into several classrooms. As she passed the student washrooms she quickly looked into each, checking to see that no students were present and that the rooms were in order. As one student hurried past her, she asked him why he was not in class. He said that he had arrived late. She checked to see that he had a late admittance slip, and then urged him to get to school on time in the future.

When she entered the reading center, she nodded in the direction of the reading teacher and motioned that she wanted to speak with Mrs. Case. Mrs. Case quickly joined her and agreed to help with the field trip. On her way out the door, Stewart complimented the reading teacher on a bulletin board entitled "Read for Experience".

Instead of returning to her office, Stewart continued to walk the halls on the second and third floors. On the third floor, she spent a few minutes studying the washroom situation. Then, stopping briefly at each classroom, she asked the teachers to be sure that only one student at a time was excused to use them. On her way back down the stairs, she detoured for a moment on the second floor to swing by a classroom with a substitute teacher, "just to see how he's doing." Finding the students somewhat unruly, she stepped into the classroom, fixing the well-known principal's stare on the children. As expected, her presence quieted the room. She greeted the substitute and inquired whether the regular teacher's substitute file was in order. He said that everything seemed fine, "they're just testing a little bit."

When Stewart returned to the office, she spoke briefly with the clerk, reviewing the arrival and assignment of substitute teachers. Stewart asked the clerk to inform the librarian that she would have to cover one of the classes during second period, if the substitute teacher did not arrive by then. Then Stewart picked up the mail that had arrived via the school system's delivery service. She asked the clerk to inform Mrs. Noyes that Mrs. Case would come on the field trip. She also asked the clerk to be sure that a teacher aide was available during seventh period to give out teaching supplies. As they talked, the clerk handed her two telephone messages.

Stewart entered her office, leaving the door to the outer office open. (A second door connecting directly to the hallway was kept closed. In this way, anyone who wanted to see Stewart had to go through the clerk. Stewart, herself, usually passed through the outer office in order to exchange information with the clerk on the way in or out of her own private office.) She quickly wrote a note to Mrs. Reynolds, on the second floor, informing her that the teacher aide would be available during seventh period to give out supplies. She also wrote a bulletin to all teachers in longhand: "Teachers: It appears that students from different classes are meeting at pre-arranged times in the third floor washrooms again. When excusing students to the washrooms, please be sure they use the nearest washroom, only. Thank you." She got up, walked to the outer office and taped the bulletin to the counter by the sign-in book. She also placed the note to Mrs. Reynolds in her mailbox.

Stewart returned to her office and placed a call to another principal who had left a message. The principal told her that he was calling a meeting of the district's science fair committee and would appreciate knowing when a convenient time would be for Stewart. They agreed to meet at 10:00 a.m. the following day at Blaire school. After the phone conversation, Stewart wrote a note to the cafeteria director, asking that coffee and some rolls be available the next morning in the conference room adjoining her office. She consulted the teachers' schedule and then also wrote a note to Mrs. St. Antoine, asking her to come to her office during seventh period. She got up, walked to the outer office and placed the notes in St. Antoine's and the cafeteria director's mailboxes.

Returning to her office, Stewart once again picked up the telephone and dialed the number of a representative from a photography company that took students' yearly pictures. No answer, so Stewart left a message that she called. She set the phone message at the corner of her desk, so that she "would remember his name when he calls again."

She then began to look at the morning mail and some items the clerk had placed in her "in" box:

-- a personnel bulletin listing several openings in the system for teachers and administrators.
-- an announcement of a conference for reading teachers.
-- a set of rating cards to be completed for each teacher. These teacher rating cards were filled out each year by the principal and placed in the teachers' personal files.

Stewart placed the rating cards to one side on her desk, then got up, taking the other items to the outer office with her. She placed the conference announcement in the reading teacher's mailbox and tacked the personnel bulletin to the teacher's bulletin board. As she did so, the clerk informed her of an incoming telephone call.

Returning to her desk, she picked up the phone and heard the voice of the photographer's representative, glancing in recognition at the name on the earlier phone message. After some preliminary pleasantries, this: "Mr. Haskins, every year we make a selection from among several school photographers to take school pictures. You say you'd like to be considered this year? Fine, I'll be glad to include you in the group. Could you send me some materials--a list of the size and kind of photo to be included in each student's packet...maybe a sample packet, O.K.? Also the cost to the student, and the amount the school keeps for each packet sold. Also any other items that you make available, such as class pictures and teacher photographs."

Stewart went on to explain to the photographer that the eighth grade faculty sponsor participated in the selection. However, the sponsor for the following year had not yet been picked out. "I'll make sure that you get the information on the selection process and the date and time of the meeting when we ask all photographers to come to the school to demonstrate their work. However, I'd appreciate it if you would not meet directly with the faculty sponsor, except of course at the demonstration session. I look forward to seeing your materials, and thanks for your interest in the school."

Stewart put down the phone and turned to the researcher: "You know, it's a pleasure dealing with these photographers. They really enjoy coming to the school, and I must say, the kids get a kick out of these sessions too." Then, turning to another subject, Stewart explained to the researcher that she had gotten a hurry-up phone call from downtown headquarters a day or so ago calling her to a special meeting on the Access to Excellence program. "It's scheduled for Friday at eleven, and that's just when I'll be putting the finishing touches on the Continuous Progress materials. I hope I can get them done in time. But, you know, these meetings...they're having more and more of them. They want to turn this school into an "academy" whatever that is. And we've got to to go downtown and sit around for a couple hours to be told what it is.

Then, no doubt, there'll be more meetings at district (headquarters) setting it up. Seems as if I spend more and more of my time away from here, going to meetings, meetings. Hard to keep on top of things here when I'm not around."

The researcher listened intently, and the two of them discussed the possibility of "academy" status and what that would mean for the school and for the community.

After a discussion of fifteen minutes, Stewart looked at her watch and saw that it was nearly time for the primary grades recess. Breaking off the conversation with the researcher, she got up, walked through the outer office, and went to stand by the exit doors to the primary play area. When the bell sounded, the children were escorted through the building toward the exit. In the ensuing commotion, Stewart spoke sharply to a few boisterous children, telling them to "walk, don't run," and to "move slowly down the stairs."

She explained in an aside to the researcher that her customary practice was to accompany the youngsters out onto the playground where she and the teachers could supervise their play. However, today, she had to get back to the office to prepare a schedule for teacher rating conferences with each teacher. Returning to her desk, she assembled the teacher evaluation materials and got from her drawer the teachers' daily schedules. Allowing 20 minutes for each teacher, she began making up a conference schedule. In the middle of this activity, she was interrupted by three boys entering the outer office, with a teacher aide following close behind. One of the boys was crying and holding the back of his head. The aide explained that the injured boy had fallen and hit his head on a patch of ice near the rim of the play area. The other two boys, she reported, had been chasing the injured boy.

Stewart moved to the outer office and told the two chasers to sit down at a bench inside the hallway door. She inspected the head injury and found that it was beginning to swell at the point of impact. Sending a student helper to the cafeteria to fetch some ice, she asked the injured boy for his name, his home telephone number, and his mother's name. She then dialed the number and spoke with the mother. After hearing what had happened, the mother said that she would come pick him up as soon as she could get a neighbor to drive her to the school. The helper soon arrived back with the ice, and Stewart wrapped it in a paper towel and gave it to the boy to place on the bump. She told him to sit down on the bench and wait for his mother, whereupon she invited the two chasers into the inner office, and closed the door. "Now look, you know you're not supposed to run where there is ice...it's too dangerous. Now that someone's hurt, the matter is serious. I want your parents to know about this." She filled out a form that requested a parent to come to school with the boys the following morning. With the boys still at her desk, she telephoned their homes and orally requested that a parent come to see her the next morning. She explained to the boys' mothers, "there's been an injury and your son was involved. Something must be done about their wild behavior during recess." She then sent the boys back to their classrooms, explaining that she would see them again in the morning.

As she gave them their hall passes, the injured boy's mother arrived. Stewart explained to her that two other boys had been involved and that she would be meeting with their parents in the morning. The mother asked her son, "Who did it?" and he replied it was "Jeff and Michael." "Those boys," the mother said, "why do they pick on him so much? Last week they pushed him in the bushes on the way home from school. Now they've gone too far." Stewart asked the mother to "let me see if I can't work something out." She promised to call her back in the morning, after she met with the other parents.

As the boy and his mother left, Stewart looked up and saw that it was beginning to snow heavily. She went to the public address system and announced that students eating lunch at school would remain inside the building during the lunchtime recess.

Stewart returned to her desk and worked on the conference schedule. but was shortly interrupted by two phone calls. One concerned the placement of a student teacher in the school. The other was from her husband, asking if she would like to meet him downtown for dinner. As Stewart was finishing the schedule, the clerk brought in a master copy of the parents' bulletin for her to approve before it was duplicated. She set aside the schedule and read through the bulletin as the clerk waited to one side. She pointed out two typos and then placed her signature on the copy master. The clerk took it and left. A moment later she returned with the U.S. mail. Stewart took a quick glance at the envelopes before setting them to one side and continuing to finish the schedule. Stewart neatly copied the final schedule by hand and then asked the clerk to place a copy of the schedule in each teacher's mailbox.

Stewart then headed toward the cafeteria, speaking with students in the hall on the way, telling them to "slow down" and "go to your recess areas." She took a tray and moved through the lunch line. Instead of going to the faculty room, she returned to her office to eat. There, she was available for teachers who might want to stop by. As she ate, she looked through the U.S. mail: promotional material for textbooks, school administration booklets, and instructional supplies. Also an announcement of a tea at a local Catholic High School for the eighth graders. Stewart set this aside and threw out the rest.

A student asked to see Stewart. As student council president, she wanted to know when the next student council meeting would be (the last meeting had been cancelled because of snow.) They picked a date and the student said that she would inform the council members. Stewart chatted for a few minutes with the girl about her plans for high school.

Getting up from her desk, Stewart carried her tray and the tea announcement to the outer office. She left the announcement in the eighth grade class sponsor's mailbox and returned her tray to the cafeteria. Then she began her tour of the hallways, inspecting the building as the students returned to their classes to settle down for the afternoon's course work.

When she returned to her office, the clerk handed her a phone message. Stewart dialed the phone for an in-house call and reached the building engineer. He told her that a small window at the back of the building had been broken during the lunch hour by some loitering high school students. He said he had covered it with some heavy cardboard, "but I thought you should know about it. Also, you know the art room...the shades in there have been damaged. The (art) teacher just lets the kids go wild in there during seventh and eighth periods. I think you should talk to him." Stewart agreed to check on it.

Miss La Pointe arrived. She had agreed to start a dramatic program in the school and wanted to report to Stewart the plans she was making for a Spring production. They discussed use of the auditorium, rehearsal schedules, the play La Pointe had selected, and the tryout announcement La Pointe had prepared. Toward the end of the seventh period, the conference was concluded and La Pointe left to return to her classroom. Stewart got up and, checking to make sure that the teacher's aide was on station in the outer office to give out supplies, headed for the art room to see the damaged shades and to make sure the students were under control.

When she returned to the office, Stewart found Mrs. St. Antoine waiting for her in the outer office. Stewart invited her into her own office and asked for an update about the plans for the eighth grade tea, dinner and other graduation festivities. St. Antoine discussed with her the results of faculty and student committee meetings to that point. Then Stewart asked St. Antoine whether she was thinking about remaining eighth grade sponsor next year. St. Antoine seemed a bit embarrassed. She said that she enjoyed working with the students very much, but that there was some jealousy from some of the other eighth grade teachers who felt excluded. They discussed how some of the other eighth grade teachers might be brought more closely into the planning, and St. Antoine left agreeing that she would try to mend some of the fences that had been neglected.

Seeing that it was near the end of the day, Stewart checked her desk to see what remained to be done. Noting the stack of material in the "in" box, she looked through it. It contained several forms that required signing; they pertained to the ordering of supplies, teacher absences, and a field trip permission. Stewart signed all of the forms but one. It was a request to order a film. Stewart was unfamiliar with the film and wanted to discuss its nature and use with the teacher before signing.

Stewart put on her hat and coat and walked to the main exit doors just as the students were beginning to leave. Stationed just outside the exit, she called to the students inside the hallway and out on the playground to "slow down," and "watch out, it's slippery." When the students were gone she returned to her office to find a tiny kindergartner sitting with tear-filled eyes next to the teacher aide. The aide explained that the girl's father was supposed to pick her up from school, but had not arrived. They tried to make some phone calls to find out who was coming for the girl, but could not get an answer. The girl suggested that they call her aunt, which they did. The aunt agreed to take the girl, but said no one could come and get her right now. Stewart agreed to bring the girl by the aunt's house. "There now," the aide told the girl, "the principal will take you to your aunt's house." Stewart placed a few items in a small brief case and was ready to leave. She waited as the aide and clerk prepared to leave also. As they put on their coats, she checked the teachers' sign-in sheets to be sure that they were all out of the building. Then she locked the office as they left together. Stewart reached for the small girl's hand and helped her down the slippery steps. Before going to her car, she muttered to the researcher, "I suppose I shouldn't be doing this...liability and all. But someone has to."

## D. DEALING WITH THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

As the foregoing account indicates, the principal's managerial routine consists partly of responding to demands from outside the school. Principal Stewart sensed an increasing load of paperwork, most of it attributable to the Continuous Progress Program. As with the record-keeping apparatus in general, the tracking of Continuous Progress statistics was handled by headquarters staff people downtown, and as the Program matured and gradually accumulated a data base, central staff statisticians were all the more interested in accurate, precise, on-time reports on each child in every school every ten weeks, in order to find out if the Program was working. Accordingly, the principal became the central cog in the machinery for collecting these numbers, organizing them into system-wide forms, checking the forms for accuracy, and then preparing them for delivery to district offices.

The seven principals examined in the generic profile above devoted about 12 percent of their time to written communications at their desks. Half to three-quarters of this time was consumed in processing documents for headquarters personnel. The general perception of the principals was that the load of this type of paperwork was indeed on the increase. One principal reported that it was necessary to take work home virtually every night to stay on top of the task. Many principals stayed at their desks after school or reported early in the morning in order to stay ahead of the mail. Others diverted time from other activities during the day to handle data-gathering for each child.

Principal Stewart, as we have seen, also sensed an increasing tempo of meetings calling her away from her building. The Chicago Public Schools leadership has been churning out new program initiatives virtually without let-up since the mid-1970s. Most of these programs, as principals see it, have been developed by planners, lawyers, technical specialists and educational politicians who have little understanding of the realities of elementary school management. Once the programs are designed, the principals are called to district or central headquarters meetings where they are instructed on how to implement these programs in their schools.

With reference to Table IV above, the principals spending the most time away from their buildings (22 and 19 percent) were attending meetings concerned with implementing new programs for their schools, including interviewing faculty candidates, inspecting materials and facilities, and discussing arrangements with superiors.

Although not required to physically leave their buildings, many principals discovered that their work configuration was sharply affected by decisions made elsewhere in the system hierarchy. A case in point: the magnet school concept. Vis-a-vis Table I above, those principals exhibiting most parent interaction (12 percent each) turned out to be those wrestling with the conversion of their hitherto neighborhood schools into combination neighborhood-magnet schools. Inevitably in such a conversion, many parents contacted the school for information about enrollment and programs, uneasy lest their children be shortchanged in the transition. Which is to say that program innovation, especially that originating at central headquarters, is more than an educational enterprise; it is in essence a political enterprise in convincing a suspicious and skeptical community.

On occasion, the principal is unwittingly drawn into outright political battles for power, either in the community or the school system at large, and discovers that the school itself becomes the arena in which these struggles are acted out. In Table II above, we see that one principal devoted 26 percent of principaling time to written communications. An analysis of this particular case reveals that some disruptive confrontations between teachers and pupils had occurred recently in the school, and that the principal's handling of these disturbances was being challenged by a self-appointed group of teachers and parents ostensibly trying to engineer the principal's removal. The principal's defensive response to this challenge was a heavy preponderance of desk work devoted to the preparation of detailed memorandums and other documents in which the principal was explaining the teacher-pupil altercations and defending the manner in which those were adjudicated.

Finally, the principal's relationship to the external environment is complicated by understandable career ambitions. In our investigation, we have been reminded that the principal, as a matter of survival in the hierarchy, must use the principalship for quasi-personal reasons. He or she must be attentive to the administrative reward system, to the plus-and-minus schedule wielded by the district superintendent and higher-ups. Principals know that advancement in the ranks sometimes goes to "the good soldier." Accordingly, principals try hard to keep problems off their boss' desk, to respond promptly to orders even when they disagree with them, and in other ways exhibit their loyalty to the organization in its encounter with sometimes hostile constituencies.

# CHAPTER IV

# THE SECONDARY PRINCIPAL

## A. INTRODUCTION

High schools in Chicago are large enterprises. In enrollment, they range from a low of about 700 to almost 5,000. Many high schools are in the 2,000 to 3,000 bracket. Together with faculty, staff and security personnel, these totals suggest a sizeable organization requiring administrative leadership of a sophisticated order. Moreover, secondary schools are complex in program and organization. The faculty is customarily divided into departments, subject disciplines or program areas. At the secondary level, advisement and guidance emerge as major adjuncts to the instructional program, and student services for course scheduling, attendance monitoring, and recordkeeping become major auxiliary support systems for the school's work. Add to these the specialized curriculum areas of band and orchestra, computer programming, Reserve Officer Training Corps, language laboratories, arts and drama, an interscholastic athletic programs. From this array of offerings, one can begin to appreciate the far-flung reaches of American education over which the secondary school principal is expected to preside.

As in many other systems, Chicago high school principals advance to this level of administration through prior service at the elementary level. Typically, their elementary principaling begins in small schools and then, with developing maturity and experience, they are moved along to larger and larger schools. Those few who demonstrate successful performance at this level are then "promoted" to the high school principalship, sometimes by way of staff positions as assistant or associate principalships under experienced principals. Assignment to a large high school is generally regarded as the top rung of site-level administration in the Chicago system. Advancement beyond this level is usually taken to mean assignment to a district superintendency (in 1980, the districts were reduced in number to 20) or to a headquarters staff position downtown. However, since these posts tend to be administrative in a paper-shuffling, rather than a personnel management, sense, many high school principals spurn these promotion possibilities, believing instead that their site-level line positions actually carry greater prestige and status in the profession at large. As in military organizations, the combat colonel in the field enjoys a certain credibility not granted to deskbound officers back at HQ.

It is important to remember also that secondary school principals differ from their colleagues at the elementary level in that their students are older, more savvy about grownups, and feverishly engaged in pushing into adulthood with their characteristic adolescent feistiness and arrogance. Being physically larger and intellectually more clever and devious, high school students represent a potential for mischief which is far more threatening to the school's stability than is true in most elementary schools. This means that the principal as chief manager of an educational program must also serve as first officer of a control apparatus, sort of a miniature police force, whose task it is to keep students in line, maintain surveillance over their behavior, and take corrective, punitive action when necessary. With the increase in crime in the wider society, and with the growing street wisdom of many high schoolers, the principal's control function in large metropolitan areas is necessarily magnified. Nowadays, parents look more and more to the high school to govern their youngsters' conduct, recognizing that they are gradually losing control at home.

We see then the picture of the urban secondary school principal as the chief administrator of a large, complex organization. The ostensible mission of this organization is education, but the modern definition of this term is so broad and all-encompassing that the school must be thought of, in real-life terms, as a multi-purpose institution: Education, yes, but also:

--custody (baby-sitting on behalf of parents and keeping young people off the streets and out of the labor market on behalf of the wider society)
--behavior control (exercising police discipline over adolescent conduct)
--career planning (through guidance and advisement, helping young people map out their future)
--psychological support ("hand holding," and helping teenagers through the agonies of adolescence)
--entertainment (serving as a production center for football games, band concerts, Christmas pageants, dramatic productions, international food bazaars, senior proms)

The modern, urban secondary school is a true center of community life, not only for the young who attend it, but for their parents, friends and neighbors. It is no wonder that secondary school principaling now takes on a sociological and political, as well as an educational, dimension in the ongoing life of one of our major social institutions.

## B. A GENERIC PROFILE

### 1. Interaction Pairings

In managing this large, complicated enterprise, the secondary principal moves through the day in contact with large numbers of people. The typical work day begins at about 8 a.m., and concludes about 3:30 p.m.. In these 450 minutes, the principal is in direct interaction with other individuals for between 200 and 300 minutes. This means that, for a typical work day, the principal spends a half to two-thirds of the time talking or listening.

[illegible] and rhythm of these interactions vary enormously. Sometimes, of course, the snippet of conversation may last only five or ten seconds. At other times, there is more to talk over and the interaction covers five, ten, or twenty minutes. On very rare occasions, the interaction covers a half hour or more.

Our clocking of face-to-face interchanges reveals that principals differ somewhat among themselves on the pace of these conversations. For example, over five work days, one secondary principal engaged in 148 face-to-face contacts covering 789 minutes, for an average of 5 minutes and 20 seconds (5:20) per conversation. Another principal in five days of work engaged in 434 interactions covering 1085 minutes for an average of only 2 minutes and 30 seconds (2:30) per contact, less than half that of his colleague. For the six secondary principals observed over 54 days or part-days of activity, the average duration of a face-to-face encounter was approximately two minutes and 50 seconds (2:50).

On the telephone, the principal interacts with an unseen party. Understandably, these interchanges are typically not extended, unless the principal is entangled with a long-winded superior or voluble parent who is better dealt with on the phone rather than in person. Over four work days, one principal conducted 36 telephone conversations covering 73 minutes for an average call time of just over 2 minutes (2:03). Another principal, over four days, held 40 phone conversations for a total of 140 minutes, or an average of three minutes, thirty seconds (3:30) for each conversation. For all six principals, the average duration of a telephone conversation was two minutes and thirty-five seconds (2:35).

These data of interaction time reveal, perhaps more vividly than any other measure, the fractionated, piece-meal character of managerial life in a secondary school. The principal must absorb, digest, and disseminate information in very small lots to very small audiences, usually an audience of one, sometimes repeating the same information many times each day to many individuals.

In our research design, we wanted to know more explicitly the exact nature of these interactions, and specifically which individuals in the principal's environment constituted the primary media of managerial activity. Table I presents in descending order the categories of people (by position) with whom the principal interacts.

It is clear from this breakdown that the bulk of the principal's personal exchanges occur with teachers, administrative aides, students and office clerks. Taken together, these individuals account for 60 percent of the face-to-face contacts of the principal during the work day. It is pertinent to point out that the principal spends roughly equivalent time with teachers, with administrators and with students.

Conversely, the principal has very little contact with the building engineer. This is partly due to the fact that in Chicago,

## TABLE I

### Interaction Pairings

(54 days or part-days of observation)

| The Principal interacted with: | Minutes | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Faculty member | 2302 | 19 |
| Assistant principal | 2178 | 18 |
| [Researcher | 1802 | 14]* |
| Student | 1828 | 15 |
| Office clerk | 949 | 8 |
| Other principals | 844 | 7 |
| District Superintendent | 636 | 5 |
| Counselor | 421 | 3 |
| Parent (or guardian or sibling) | 292 | 2 |
| Central office staff | 207 | 2 |
| Building engineer (Head janitor) | 161 | 1 |
| Community official, police | 146 | 1 |
| Teacher Aide | 102 | 1 |
| Security personnel | 72 | 1 |
| Other | 201 | 2 |
| | 12,166 | 100 |

* Unavoidably, the researcher becomes part of the interactive environment and falls into the role of an ad hoc colleague of the principal, receiving information, impressions, interpretations and administrative insights from the principal as the day proceeds. Although these interactions pre-empted about one-sixth of the typical work day, they do not appear to have disturbed the general flow of work or the distribution of interactions with the principal's regular associates. See text.

the engineers belong to a parallel hierarchy, all the way to headquarters downtown, and are not answerable to the principal. As the chief educational officer at the school site level, the principal must operate by persuasion and negotiation with his counterpart in the engineer corps. Although in some schools this two-headed arrangement creates some problems, for the most part it seems to work. In any event, the principal finds it agreeable not to have extended contact with this person.

The principal also spends very little of the work day in contact with his staff or line superiors. Only 7 percent of the time is devoted to interchanges with the district superintendent, the district staff, or the downtown headquarters staff. We have noted elsewhere in this report that the big-city school system is a loose-coupling of relatively autonomous units. The infrequency of contact with administrative superiors would appear to fortify the legitimacy of this generalization.

As noted in the footnote to Table I, the principal's interactions with the researcher took up 14 percent, or about 63 minutes, of the typical work day of 450 minutes. Some small portion of this time consisted of interchanges early in the observation schedule during which the researcher was attempting to get quickly acquainted with the school and sought background information from the principal on the observation site. However, as the observation proceeded, it was increasingly the principal who voluntarily diverted himself from school business to offer spontaneous observations, interpretations and speculations as to what was going on. Toward the end of the observation schedule, these voluntary commentaries by the principal increased in frequency and duration, sometimes stretching into lengthy bull sessions toward the end of the school day on what principaling is all about.

Like many other positions in managerial settings, the job of principal is solitary and lonely. As rapport begins to build between the principal and the researcher, as trust grows, and as the principal increasingly identifies with the research project itself, he finds in the researcher a professional companion with whom he can share hitherto private impressions of his work. As data-gatherers, we made no effort to shut off these conversations, even though they did not strictly represent "principaling behavior;" certainly the principal would not have engaged in these commentaries had we not been there. We allowed them into our work schedule because we believed--correctly, as it turned out--that through such observations and insights, we might obtain a more human picture of the administrative art. It is readily acknowledged that any involvement of the researcher, however inadvertent and unintended, does nevertheless serve to disturb the integrity and purity of the observation. Indeed, our mere presence ineluctably alters the situation being observed (see Appendix C). But it is our considered judgment that these special dialogues with the principal provided a much-needed counterpoint to our otherwise bloodless and matter-of-fact reporting of their conduct. In the end, we were convinced that these special discussions were well worth the disturbances caused by minor deviations from the principal's work schedule.

## 2. Initiatory Behavior

In developing the overall plan of our study, we were interested in learning which of the two parties in these interactions was responsible for initiating the piece of business which was to be transacted between them. Table II provides a distribution of initiating behavior.

It is clear from this tabulation that the principal takes the initiative in the vast majority of interchanges with others in the managerial environment. Considering the principal's leadership role, this finding is not surprising. Once again, there appears to be a rough equivalence between faculty members, administrative aides, and students in the role they play in initiatory conduct. Here also is further evidence of the relative autonomy of the principal; only 5 percent of the work day consists in responding to initiatives from the district superintendent or the downtown staff.

## 3. Medium of Communication

In carrying on the administrative function, the secondary school principal conducts the verbal interchanges in a face-to-face mode. The work day, however, embraces many other means of communication: conversations on the telephone, visual inspection of the environment, reading and writing of memoranda, and occasional use of the public address system. Table III provides a distribution of time through the five different media.

As noted elsewhere in this report, the principal is a talker and listener. We see from Table III that a total of 83 percent of principaling time is devoted to these activities. Coordinately the principal is not oriented to print, either in producing or consuming it. As he or she moves through the administrative work day, the principal is a quintessential paradigm of what Marshall McLuhan would have called the "cool medium" (non-print) communicator, relying almost exclusively on the spoken word in conducting the work of the school from hour to hour.

## 4. Locus of Administrative Activity

Where is the job of principal performed? We decided to get a literal answer, namely those physical spots in the school building

## TABLE II

## Initiating Parties in Interaction Pairings

(54 days or part-days of observation)

| Interchange initiated by: | Minutes | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Principal | 9421 | 68 |
| Faculty member | 777 | 6 |
| Assistant principal | 627 | 4 |
| Student | 591 | 4 |
| [Researcher | 585 | 4]* |
| District Superintendent | 534 | 4 |
| Office clerk | 387 | 3 |
| Other principals | 247 | 2 |
| Parent (or guardian or sibling) | 242 | 2 |
| Counselor | 200 | 1 |
| Central office staff | 98 | 1 |
| Community official, police | 86 | 1 |
| Building engineer | 55 | 1 |
| | 13,931 | 100 |

* As noted in the previous section, the researcher inevitably gets caught up in verbal interchange. Most of these conversations are initiated by the principal. On rare occasions (4%), the researcher initiated the discussion.

## TABLE III

## Medium of Communication in Principaling Behavior

(54 days or part-days of observation)

| Medium | Minutes | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Verbal, face-to-face | 11,042 | 75 |
| Visual (eyeballing the environment) | 1,501 | 10 |
| Verbal, telephone | 1,071 | 7 |
| Written (reading or writing) | 1,007 | 7 |
| Verbal, public address system | 87 | 1 |
|  | 14,708 | 100 |

and elsewhere which serve as the principal's work sites. Conventional wisdom might suggest that the principal, as the chief officer, enjoys the special privilege of a private office, and that the bulk of managerial work would typically be conducted in that place. This turns out not to be the case. Table IV provides a breakdown of physical sites where the principal carries on the business of the school.

We see immediately from this table that less than half of principaling activity among secondary principals takes place in the principal's office. For 55 percent of the work day, the principal is somewhere else!

Much of this time is off school grounds altogether, attending meetings, conferring with the district superintendent, visiting other (feeder) schools, or going directly to downtown headquarters to straighten out a problem.

About a tenth of the time, the principal is in the corridor. Add to this the time spent in student-frequented areas--lunch room, classrooms, auditorium and gymnasium--and we see that almost one-third of the principal's work schedule is in close proximity to students.

Principals typically avoid the teachers' lounge, apparently agreeing with teachers that this area is a retreat, a sanctuary away from both students and administrators. They also spend little time in gymnasiums or on the playgrounds, leaving these large instructional areas to the special faculty assigned for this purpose.

Secondary principals are also conspicuous by their relative absence from the site of teaching and learning, the classroom. In professional circles, it is generally thought that a primary responsibility of the principal is the evaluation and improvement of instruction. However, our field work revealed that secondary school principals do not spend much time doing this. Of course, in large high schools, the principals turn over much of the observation and evaluation of teachers to assistant principals. But the principal knows, as we all do, that evaluating teaching is a generally unpleasant task. Standing in judgment of other people is always difficult; playing God does not suit most of us, especially when the judgee (the teacher) has attended the teacher training institution and knows as much about pedagogy as any principal. Also, teaching is a highly personal art, and what may work for a teacher with his or her students, may strike the observer-evaluator as unorthodox, or worse, counter-productive. Who, therefore, is the competent judge?

Principals have pointed out to us on numerous occasions that they do not spend much time evaluating teaching because, when one gets to the bottom line, such monitoring has only a marginal impact

## TABLE IV

## Locus of Principaling Activity

(54 days or part-days of observation)

| Locus | Minutes | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Inner office | 6396 | 45 |
| Off school grounds (District office, downtown headquarters, other schools, other agencies) | 1670 | 12 |
| Corridor | 1306 | 9 |
| Lunch room | 1221 | 8 |
| Classroom | 1073 | 7 |
| Other administrative offices (Assistant principals, counselors, etc.) | 866 | 6 |
| Outer office (Front counter) | 770 | 5 |
| Auditorium | 696 | 5 |
| Gymnasium | 187 | 1 |
| Faculty lounge, restroom, etc. | 91 | 1 |
| Social room | 53 | 1 |
| Playground | 12 | - |
|  | 14,341 | 100 |

on the overall quality of instruction in the school. Even in the case of gross incompetence, the principal is required to spend weeks and months in carefully staged observations, teacher conferences, consultations with the district superintendent, not to mention the piece-by-piece accumulation of supporting documents--the "paper trail"--to prosecute the case. And these long hours, personally unpleasant and emotionally draining, customarily lead nowhere: the impossibly incompetent teacher is simply transferred to another school by central headquarters to inflict his or her stupidity on another group of unsuspecting students.

So why, they argue, spend these precious hours on the critical upgrading of teaching when the bureaucracy above renders this effort all for nought? The principals answer by staying out of the classroom.

## C. A CASE STUDY

What we can discern from the foregoing sections is a generic profile of life as a secondary school principal. What needs doing now is to bring these statistics to life by showing a prototypical principal in action. One of the four researchers in the present study spent ten days (five of them consecutive) at one of the high schools under review. During these days, observing from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., the researcher observed a progression of events which gives substance to the general view in this report that the principal of the urban secondary school is a face-to-face communicator, a paripatetic commandant over his domain, a semi-autonomous site-level officer in charge of a unit only loosely coupled with the remainder of the system, and typically an individual who has engendered among his faculty and students that special blend of fear, love, and overall respect which is the magic ingredient of managerial leadership in organizational life. Here is how a day went:

The principal, Mr. Geller, is in his forties, a wiry, agile alumnus of athletic exploits in earlier days. Like other male principals, Geller has come up through the coaching ranks and has served his administrative apprenticeship in several elementary schools. Now he oversees a large, complex high school with over 4,000 students and more than 200 faculty and staff. He likes his work, and appears to have an easygoing, comfortable relationship with those around him. This particular morning, he arrives at his desk around 8 and sits down to glance over some mail placed there by his secretary who had arrived a few minutes earlier. As he studies an attendance report, the doorway darkens with the figure of a youth wearing a distraught, hang-dog look on his face: "Mr. Geller, I've been barred from class. My mom hasn't got here yet to 'bail me out.' They've got me in the 'Bar Room' (a holding pen for malingering students). Can you do something?" Mr. G. consoles the boy, informing him that his first stop should be his counselor; with a friendly smile, he waves the boy off and returns to his mail.

He soon tires of this activity and decides instead to take off on his daily ritual, a first-period cruise of the corridors to see how the school fares this morning. As he strides down the hallways, he greets teachers, asks students to produce their I.D. cards, tells a boy to take off his hat. Moving on to the journalism teacher's room, he stops the teacher and says: "Joe, you know those yearbooks last June...we weren't able to unload them because they arrived after the kids had finished school. It's Christmas season. What do you say we put an ad in the school bulletin that we're selling last year's yearbook for the bargain price of $3? Think they'd sell as gifts?" The two of them discuss this briefly, and then Mr. G. continues on his sojourn through the corridors.

Checking the walls for Magic Marker graffiti, picking up a stray wad of paper, glancing in an occasional classroom to see how things are going, he moves briskly through the halls for a visual check of the premises. It is a large, five-level structure that has been remodeled and added on to frequently down through the decades, so he does not expect to cover the entire domain. But he gets the feel of a new day, and after about 20 minutes, eventually works his way back to the first floor and to his office where he sits down for another go at the mail.

An assistant principal comes in and says that the Fire Marshall is here, that he wants to hold a fire drill this morning because the weather is good, even though the temperature is about 30. This means that it must be an announced drill, so the kids can get their coats. After a brief discussion with his assistant principal and the marshal, Mr. G. announces the drill over the P.A. system and sets it for later that morning. The drill will be complicated by the fact that about ten minutes before the drill signal is to be sounded, an assistant principal receives a telephone call from an unidentified caller informing him that there is a bomb in the girl's washroom. Mr. G. and his aides ponder a course of action, calling downtown HQ for standard operating procedures in circumstances of this sort. Geller muses aloud: "This is the worst thing that could happen right now...once they see us empty this building, they'll think they're responsible." Eventually, the bomb threat turns out to be a hoax, and the drill proceeds on schedule.

Mr. G. spends the time before and after the drill conferring with his assistant principals, handling clerical materials with the secretaries, answering questions of students who drop in unannounced. Geller has his mind, however, on a scheduled meeting of the social studies teachers set for 10:00. They drift in, one by one, and sit down in the circle of easy chairs. Around 10:15, after some small talk, Geller opens the meeting. The problem centers on the drop in enrollment in traditional history classes, with the students opting for the more "relevant" and probably easier courses in contemporary problems. If something isn't done about this drain of students away from standard history courses, there is likely to be a cut-off in budget slots and some faculty will lose their jobs.

All those present recognize the basic cause of the problem: the school's clientele is changing because the attendance area is changing. Minority students in increasing numbers are entering the freshman class, but they are not doing well in the regular, traditional curriculum. And, if they become discouraged during their freshman year, they tend to drop out and typically do not return. If these students could somehow be kept in school through their first year, argues Geller, there is a good chance that the school could keep them through the full four years until graduation. Can the history and social studies faculty assist in redesigning the freshman offerings so as to enable the school to hang on to these students? Understandably, the history teachers in the group are both worried and angry. Why should they be expected to shift to courses for which their training did not prepare them? Why must the school change its programs simply because a new type of student is showing up? An hour's discussion focuses on the ramifications of different remedies. No consensus. But next week there will have to be some action started on this problem.

The teachers slowly rise from their chairs, grumbling about lowering standards, and watering down requirements. But the message has been delivered and they appear to have gotten it. In a head-shaking mien of resignation they depart to return to their classrooms.

With the meeting concluded, Geller confers briefly with the assistant principals in a post-mortem on the meeting. Geller assigns one of them the task of following up on this problem and helping the teachers to work out with their department head some ideas for resolving the difficulty.

As the aides leave, Geller turns his attention to the drafting of his Performance Appraisal Profile (PAP), a document which each principal is expected to submit annually to the district superintendent as a guide to a performance evaluation during the coming year. Headquarters downtown has specified several all-system goals that each principal is to work toward. This year, one of them is the reduction in vandalism. Geller glances at last year's figure and is puzzled to read "5 cents per pupil." He surmises that this must be a typo, since vandalism for a school of this type usually runs 40 to 50 cents per pupil. As a goal, he jots down the figure of ten cents.

As he works on other sections of the PAP, several students drop in with special scheduling problems, a teacher sticks his head in the door to report that the photocopying machine is not functioning, a student messenger appears bearing an eligibility list of the bowling team which Geller must sign, and an assistant comes in asking for a signature on a crowd control form--a basketball game is imminent and special manpower is required to handle the crowd. As the aide leaves, Geller returns to his paper work, jotting down ideas for the PAP. Over and beyond the system-wide goals, each principal is to set down his or her own personal goals for the coming year. Geller decides on four:

(a) implementation of Access to Excellence programs,
(b) in-service training for his teachers,
(c) implementation of the North Central recommendations from a visit by the Association a year ago, and
(d) development of better communications with the school community.

Geller mentally caresses this last one; he knows his district superintendent is especially interested in it. Furthermore, he knows that it is the kind of goal that lends itself to self-enhancing documentation--schedules of contacts with community leaders, minutes of meetings held, letters from parents and political figures extolling the school, etc. It is the kind of goal that can be supported by a body of "evidence."

As Geller scrawls the most convincing wording for these goals on his working draft, he is interrupted by a secretary coming in to say that there is a man in the outer office who is asking to put health foods into the lunchroom; can she usher him in? Geller waves her off, telling her to send him to the lunchroom director. As the secretary leaves, a teacher (the student council sponsor) and an assistant principal come in to discuss arrangements for a rock group scheduled to perform at the school next week. This is the kind of event which will require very careful planning. After about fifteen minutes, the two depart and G. turns once again to his desk papers.

He looks at the vandalism item on the PAP. Realizing he needs more information on this, he gets up and takes a hundred-yard hike through the back passageways to the engineer's quarters. The engineer greets him, and they discuss the graffiti problem and the worsening vandalism of the auditorium. The engineer reports that balcony seats are being torn up by students when they are forced to use that area for a study hall. Since these seats are no longer manufactured, and cannot be replaced, some existing seats must be cannibalized to make repairs on others. This means that the seating capacity of the auditorium is gradually declining.

Geller returns to his office but then leaves almost immediately for a general tour of the building. His first stop is the "Bar Room," where he speaks to the students briefly about their infractions and his hope that they will shape up, get reinstated, and get on with their studies. The students respond with stares and smirks, resentful of incarceration and this "pep talk" by the chief warden. *Sotto voce*, the teacher expresses her frustration to Geller: "When I call their parents, asking them to come down to school to bail out their kids, they hang up on me!" Geller commiserates, and compliments her on her efforts.

Geller departs and continues on the tour of the school, stopping to look at a teacher putting up a bulletin board display, then moving on to watch a musical rehearsal in the auditorium, then into a classroom to witness a one-on-one tutorial lesson for a student learning English as a foreign language, and then to the gym for a soccer game. As he moves, Geller peeks into various classrooms en route, seeing how things are going. At one classroom, he gently taps on the door and motions the male teacher to step out. The teacher emerges, and Geller whispers in his ear: "Your fly is open."

Geller moves on toward the lunchroom, where he gets his tray and then sits with his regular coterie of staff friends in the cafeteria. (One of them offers an explanation to the researcher: "We have a rule: No shop talk at lunch!") They discuss the weather, gambling trips to Las Vegas, the fortunes of the Chicago Bears and Chicago Cubs, the shocking murder of a colleague a month previous). Thirty-five minutes is enough for lunch, so Geller takes his tray to the collecting point and, with the engineer (one of the lunchroom coterie) he goes to check out the boilerroom where some repair work is in progress.

About one o'clock he arrives back at his office. Among his messages is one marked "personal and confidential." It is a letter from an irate parent claiming that her daughter has been falsely accused of calling a teacher "a fucking bitch." What is the principal going to do about this?

A clerk comes in and reports that a teacher is complaining that $26 has been incorrectly deducted from his paycheck. Can Mr. G. look into this? Then a phone call from downtown headquarters comes in--it is a staff person returning the call. Geller says: "Yes, Lucile, I've got this Social Mal (socially maladjusted) kid. He's been suspended, but he's due back Wednesday. Do we open up a special class for him? He's the only one we've got at the moment. Or do we put him in with some other Special Ed classes?" A discussion ensues as to how to handle the placement of this one student when he arrives Wednesday morning. When he gets his instruction, Geller hangs up.

Geller turns again to his desk work and jots a note to himself on the $26 paycheck deduction. As he turns to the other papers, he interrupts himself, turns to the researcher, and says: "Remember last time you were here...those fellows ripping out the seats in 204? Look, here's what they found stuffed into the metal posts holding up those old desks." He hands the researcher a crumpled, aging piece of notebook paper. In the upper right-hand corner is the notation: "Raymond Voss, March 19, 1930." It is a student's theme on Edgar Allen Poe's "The Telltale Heart." Geller continues: "You know, the 50th reunion for this guy's class is coming up. Maybe we could locate Voss--if he's still alive...He'd be nearing 70--find out what he's doing now, and have him come to the reunion. I'm sorting out the stuff the men bring me as they tear out these seats. It's quite a collection--a school newspaper from 1948, book reports from the fifties, scrawled notes to classmates."

The researcher looks over the Poe theme, and remarks: "This is fascinating. Why don't you get your history department to make a student project out of this...get these papers together, track down the people who wrote them, bring them into class to tell the students what has happened to them since leaving high school. It would make a great teaching unit!" Geller ponders this for a moment, then with resignation in his voice, says: "Well, no chance of that, I'm afraid...the history teachers are not interested in that kind of history. They want to stick with what they've been trained for..the English kings, the industrial revolution, the Civil War...you know...history in books!" Geller lands hard on this last word, but then his voice trails off as the researcher hands back to him the rumpled 1930 theme paper. The idea dies aborning, as Geller and the researcher turn to other topics for a ten-minute exchange on recent events in the school.

Finally, Geller returns to his papers, then picks up the phone and asks a couple of his assistant principals to drop in. They enter and he shows them the "fucking bitch" letter and asks for some background on the situation. After a discussion on how to handle this mother, he asks one of the aides, "Look, you get the mother in here, get the girl, and ask the teacher to come down. We'll talk the whole thing out right here. You be here too." As they depart, there is an incoming phone call from a parent complaining that her daughter was not allowed to leave school for a family trip. Geller listens, then responds; "Well, Mrs. Kladany, the teacher is absolute boss on excusing students. You know that. I just can't overrule a teacher on something like this." They discuss the problem for some minutes, Geller holding his ground. Then, to ease the tone and hopefully bring the telephone call to a conclusion, he says: "Is your leg still in a cast? How's it coming?" Mrs. K is appropriately disarmed and concludes the conversation so that Geller can get back to work.

The next hour or so is taken up with continued work on the draft PAP, and with students popping in to get their schedules changed. As he deals with these individuals, G receives a phone call from a woman in the Mayor's office asking for a room in which to hold a meeting. For most outside groups, the answer would be no. But a room will be found for this caller, to be sure. A girl student comes in; she is accompanied by her sister (not a student in the school). She needs to be reinstated after being suspended for too much cutting. Her sister says: "I'm here in place of my aunt...She can't come in today. .Mr. G., I know you need a parent here to reinstate, but our father doesn't live with us and our mother is in Central America visiting her sick father...he just had a stroke...and we don't know when she'll be back." Geller interrogates the student, ponders an answer, then writes a note for the girl authorizing her reinstatement, and sends the two of them on their way.

Geller returns to the desk, jots a note to the engineer asking him to remove some broken hardware from a swinging door on the third floor; it is sticking out in the hallway and is a hazard to those passing by. He then takes a look at a report from downtown on alternative programs for job-holding students who want to get a high school diploma in the evening school.

Picking up some papers, Geller then moves to the administrative outer office, delivering some end-of-the-day materials and giving instructions for clerks and secretaries. Then he decides to take another short spin through the corridors. Almost immediately, two girls spot him, and come up to report that there are cockroaches in the locker room. Can he check on this? After another hundred yards of walking, watching the students put on their coats for the trip home, he decides to return to his office. On arrival, he phones the engineer regarding the cockroaches, and then turns once again to his paperwork. A sealed envelope to "Mr. Geller, Principal" confronts him. He opens it and reads a long, rambling memo from a teacher complaining about his treatment the previous day when Geller had to criticize him for allowing his study hall students to wander out into the hallways. The last paragraph of the letter carries a mild threat: "I am forwarding copies of this letter to the district superintendent and to Operation PUSH."

Geller is non-plussed by the letter, coming as it does from an otherwise competent, responsible, cooperative teacher. One phrase in the letter is particularly cryptic. The dissident teacher accuses Geller of "abusing my professional experience." This phrase makes no sense. Did someone else write this letter for the teacher? If so, what is the motivation? And why the intimidating tactic of involving an outside organization in such a complaint?

Answers to these questions may come in time, but for now they can wait. Geller knows that this kind of complaint must be dealt with promptly. He places the letter on top of the others on the desk..."I'll get to that first thing in the morning." Gathering up some other materials and putting them in his briefcase, Geller, pondering how he could have "abused a teacher's professional experience," heads for the parking lot.

## D. CONCLUSION

We see from the previous sections and from the above case study that the tempo of life in a principal's work day is not conducive to serene reflection. There is a certain tumble of events, one after another, which requires a quick facility to move abruptly from one subject matter to another. The principal is expected to store in his "memory drum" the contents of hundreds of conversations, many of them not related to one another, and to retrieve the relevant elements of these conversations later the same day, tomorrow or next week.

There also seems to be little rank-ordering in the importance of events, everything seeming to blend together in an undifferentiated jumble of activities presumably related, however remotely, to the ongoing vitality and purpose of the larger enterprise. The principal must deal with a critical problem in the school's curricular program, i.e., the freshman history sequence. And yet, the entire matter is elbowed aside, denied a position of deserved prominence, by a cascading farrago of other concerns--auditorium seats, a foul-mouthed girl, bomb threats and...cockroaches!

Management, whatever else it is, is the art of being the bridge between the long view and the nitty particulars of organizational life. As we have seen, this truism is no better illustrated than in the secondary school principalship.

# PART THREE

# DISCRETIONARY DECISION-MAKING

# CHAPTER V

# PRINCIPALING AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE SCHOOL

# V-A: STABILIZATION AND ENHANCEMENT: A Managers Balancing Act

## 1. Introduction

It is difficult to convey in print the charged atmosphere of site-level administration in a city school system. Yes, there are daily routines, long periods of uneventfulness and much procedural repetition. But the management of a city school (whether elementary or secondary) occurs within an environment of considerable tension and anticipation. Many events are unpredictable and can easily drift out of control. Things happen fast, without warning. A near-drowning in the swimming pool; a stabbing on a second floor stairwell; a school assembly that becomes a mini "riot"; two children lost on a field trip to the zoo; a student, or a teacher, "gone berserk"; and the usual rash of fights, cuts and bruises, and disciplinary incidents--are all very much part of the job, and very much on the mind of the principal on even the most placid of days.

The building principal's first responsibility is to harness and get control of the unpredictability of the school community. As the managerial official most consistently in contact with the school system's pupil, parent and neighborhood clientele, the principal is most critically concerned with the maintenance of a controlled and orderly learning environment.

The building principal is also the person most authoritatively in charge of the teaching and learning activity that comprises the essential purpose of schooling. The principal is expected to be the "institutional leader," to encourage new curricula, foster change, encourage experimentation, upgrade staff quality, add programs, and alter attitudes. The principal must constantly search for additional school resources, rearrange personnel and institutionalized structures, improve the image of the school, and encourage parent involvement.

Thus, both stabilization and enhancement activities are essential elements of the principalship role--and both must be pursued simultaneously, with much tension between them. Principals are given the difficult job of maintaining organizational stability and at the same time changing and improving the school environment (see, Moore, 1975).[1] Too much stabilization could deaden the enterprise; too much enhancement can be disorienting and counter-productive. How does the principal find the right balance? Three key areas in which the principal typically seeks to establish a balance between organizational improvement/enhancement and organizational stability/control are: First, school discipline and control; second, parent/community involvement; and third, teacher/staff capability and conduct.

## 2. Discipline and Behavior Management

A key responsibility of every principal is the supervision of school decorum and disciplinary order. Styles, of course, vary. Some principals give much personal effort to the strict control of pupil behavior, the cleanliness of the school, etc.; others are more willing to accept a bit of noise, confusion, and untidiness while nonetheless overseeing the maintenance of control. Although disciplinary structure can be maintained for its own sake, and certainly is a necessary accompaniment to pupil safety and classroom efficiency, many principals extend the maintenance of control to enhance the school's learning atmosphere. In this strategy they concentrate upon: (a) the anticipation of likely problems, (b) the effective control of events and crises that do occur, and (c) the development and enforcement of school rules as guides to proper institutional behavior.

a. Problem Anticipation--Principals tend to spend a good deal of time "on the go." Much of each day is spent in motion--a tour of the halls, a monitoring of the cafeteria during the lunch period(s), a quick check upon and observation of activities underway (classroom learning, school assemblies, the library, physical education) throughout the building; checking items of information with the school staff; making sure individuals (e.g., aides, hall monitors, playground supervisors, street crossing guards) are on duty; being generally available to both staff members and pupils who have questions or items of information, comments, and special problems.

Much of the movement of the principal around the school and its environs is in the nature of a "search routine"--involving both the maintenance of a physical presence in the school and an attempt to anticipate and quell potential trouble. A common observation by the principals is that this activity permits them to gauge the school climate. A halls tour of just a few minutes, with merely seconds listening to the sounds coming from each classroom, gives a quick reading of "what's going on," how well the school has "settled down to its business," what the "temper and mood of the student body seems to be today." Most principals quickly develop a "sixth sense" concerning possible trouble--as Principal Decks explains while detaining some students in the halls, allowing others to pass undisturbed: "Some kids you don't need to ask, you know they're okay." Elementary and high school principals alike will commonly position themselves near a main entrance at times of pupil entrance and exit and typically walk the halls and corridors of the school at various "passing periods." Frequently, at these moments a fight is stopped, a bit of excess noise is quelled, the disciplinary rules of the school are made manifest, potential accidents are spotted and averted.

By being on-the-go and very visibly in charge at times and places of potential disorder, the principal sustains an atmosphere of purposefulness and control in an environment of volatile uncertainty. Many occurrences call for adroit, careful handling by a principal who is on the scene and ready to act decisively at a moment's notice. Restoring order and calming frightened youngsters after rocks have sailed through second-story windows, showering classrooms with glass; tracking down school buses that are nearly two hours late in claiming pupils at the end of the day, while simultaneously soothing frantic parents; meeting with and attending to outraged parents who have suddenly descended upon the school with a complaint about a teacher--all these require a person in authority to be "on call" and very much "in charge" at all times. Similarly, the heading off of complications before they develop are critical, anticipatory elements of the job. Some very recent racial incidents at a neighboring high school cause a concern for tightened security in planning an upcoming dance; rumors of a coming gang battle at a local park lead two elementary principals to warn pupils away from the park over the weekend; a field trip being planned and conducted by a not overly responsible teacher prompts efforts to make sure that an abundance of conscientious parents and school aides go along; a very busy intersection near the school is checked each day to make sure that an adult crossing guard, who has a rather poor attendance record, is in place.

b. Event Management--In the midst of a constant threat of unforeseen events and potentially disruptive occurrences, principals commonly engage in some categories of behavior which seek to control and order the parameters of unintended activity. One strategy is to seek to keep the "fallout" from any unusual event to a minimum. For example, when Principal Smith learned that a large rock had been thrown through a second floor window, spraying a room with glass, his initial response (after making sure there were no injuries) was not to send persons looking for those who threw the rock; instead, he sent staff members to the second floor to enter classrooms and explain the incident, herd pupils now in the halls back into classes, quiet things down, enforce order. "They'll all be excited and keyed up on the second floor now, and that tension will build and build if we don't quiet everything down right away." In another setting Principal Gordon stressed upon his teachers the importance of not referring to yesterday's student outburst in the auditorium as a "riot." If we use the term 'riot' then we've created it." The teachers were urged to drop all further discussion of the incident: "It's over; you can't run this thing into the ground. Shift your talk to the students who performed well all day long at the festival, not to the problems that lasted just a few seconds at the end."

By managing the "fallout" from the unpredictability of school life, the principal copes with organizational expectations of order and control amidst an ever-present danger that events will get out of hand. As earlier research by Sarason (1971),[2] Wolcott (1973, 1977),[3] and Blumberg and Greenfield (1980)[4] stress, the mark of an effective principal from the central office perspective is to "keep things calm" and to see that the work of the school system proceeds smoothly.

c. Rule Enforcement--Despite the existence of security aides, assistant principals for discipline, teachers on hall duty or cafeteria duty, plus even city police officers on full duty in some schools, principals personally spend a good deal of their time each day in the enforcement of school rules and in the maintenance of an orderly school environment. Principal A (in an elementary school) spends an average of seventy-five minutes in his working day supervising the movement of pupils into and out of the school building, overseeing pupil behavior in the cafeteria and in the halls during the lunch hour, and "touring" the school corridors during passing periods. Principal B (also in an elementary school) spends less time policing the school during the day but is careful to eat his lunch each noon with the students in the cafeteria and to exit the building with the pupils at afternoon dismissal--stopping fights, shooing pupils off the school grounds towards home (devoting an average of twenty-five minutes in his day). Principals C and D (both in high schools) spend an average of thirty minutes of their working day similarly supervising and regulating student behavior ("hats off please," "hurry or you'll be late to class," "where's your ID badge?") as pupils enter and leave the building, eat lunch, exchange classes, and group for special occurrences (e.g., an after-school dance).

A common problem for high school principals is the maintenance of school security vis-a-vis the surrounding community. Often a continuous battle is waged to keep "outsiders" out of the school and to enforce a rule that legitimate "insiders" must wear their ID tags. Both elementary and high school principals typically also do a bit of housecleaning while patrolling the halls (e.g., asking pupils they see to pick up loose papers, occasionally gathering a bit of trash themselves and throwing it away). More than simply a concern for cleanliness, this "housecleaning" activity, along with the rule enforcement effort, communicates an important message of environmental quality. Although the physical plant in much of the city is in urgent need of repair and rehabilitation, school principals commonly do their best with limited resources amidst unattractive surroundings to communicate an image of a well-ordered learning environment.

Again, there is tension created by the need to balance orderliness and stability against institutional development and improvement. As the school attempts to control and regularize the behavior of students in the name of a stable environment, it also must be sure that the enforcement of rules is responsible and orderly; if inconsistency in rule enforcement develops in a school, that can produce as much chaos and disorder as the original disorderly behavior of the pupils.

### 3. Fostering Parent and Community Involvement While Maintaining Control Over "Outside" Influences

City school administrators have been traditionally wary of establishing too open and accepting a relationship with their surrounding community (see Mann, 1976).[5] Nevertheless parent and neighborhood involvement has now become a major focus of the school principalship. Parents as never before are being used as aides and volunteers in the instructional work of city schools. It is well understood, however, that parent involvement and "outside" influences upon the school are to be kept in balance. Principals are expected by the school system to establish friendly and useful relationships with their local neighborhoods but are similarly expected to buttress the larger organization from the demands and pressures of community groups. Principals come to value both the political power and the extra help that a very active and supportive neighborhood can provide but are conscious of the need to maintain a distance between the school and its community clientele in critical decisions of staffing, resource allocation, pupil control policy, and school curriculum. Parent involvement is, almost by definition, a destabilizing influence opon the school. However, supportive parents, sharing the goals of the institution (say in enforcing homework rules or helping to monitor the playground) can add considerably to the enhancement effort.

Principals employ three strategies to balance constituent interests and parental involvement against the stability demanded by professional and organizational values: (a) the use of the community to protect areas of principalship authority and/or resource control, (b) the discretionary use of the principal's office to build community support, and (c) the orchestration of community involvement in such fashion as to engender interest in the work of the school without generating school-community conflict.

a. Using the Community to Protect the Work of the School--Occasionally groups of parents will "pack" a school board meeting, flood headquarters with mail, or picket the board of education offices--expressing concerns about a particular school's program, staffing, or resource allocation. The principals serving in schools where these drastic actions develop are not highly regarded, however, by their superiors and peers. The overt use of community support to pressure a school board response is much frowned upon. When Principal Carter fostered, as a last resort, a letter writing campaign and the development of articles in the community newspaper in order to acquire some critically needed textbook funds, the funds were forthcoming but in company with some very direct criticism. "You shouldn't have done that, you embarrassed us," commented his immediate superior.

Generally, approaches to the use of the community to protect the work and the resources of the individual school are much more subtle. In the course of involving parents in fund-raising (e.g., bazaars, bake sales, candy sales), in pageants (e.g., a Christmas performance, a science fair, an art fair), and in field trips (e.g., a state capital trip; museum and zoo trips)--the school channels parent energy and involvement into supportive activities and activities that increase, sometimes considerably, the staff resources available to the principal.

Some principals will cultivate nearby residents (often some grandmothers in the area) as "spotters" for the school--persons who know the community well and can warn the school of unusual developments (e.g., there's a rumor of drug dealing at a corner grocery; two gangs had a fight over the weekend at a nearby park; Mrs. B's husband was arrested last night and her four children are very much "on edge"). Occasionally, principals will "politicize" a few parents in their community, to the extent of keeping them informed of board of education actions, letting them in on rumors of policy change, and providing them with "inside" information about the larger bureaucracy. These parents are frequently active on school advisory committees that serve higher levels of the organizational hierarchy and constitute a political force of some potential, a force that helps protect the school from "harassment" within the school system.

b. Building Community Support--Many principals devote a substantial amount of time to the cultivation of the surrounding community. Principal

Masters schedules a series of coffees in the homes of parents over the course of each year--inviting a few parents upon each occasion to the home of another, to discuss the work of the school and to become better acquainted. Principal Mercer uses a battery-operated bullhorn each morning and noon hour to herd students into the school--explaining that he hates to use the thing but the parents expect it and watch to make sure he does use it. Principals Harper and Cory devote a good deal of attention to "outreach" efforts--organizing visits to nearby senior citizen's homes and clubs, arranging food baskets for needy families in the neighborhood at Christmas. Principal Johnson is active in a local businessman's organization and has secured the agreement of a neighborhood bank to sponsor prizes (e.g., savings bonds, cash awards) for academic excellence in his school.

One of the most effective means for solidifying community support, however, is the principal's discretionary response to requests for special consideration. Most often, such discretion involves the provision of access to the school and its programs through unusual channels or procedures. A father makes a personal request to Principal Roberts, for example, asking that his son be admitted to the school's special education program, even though the school district's testing procedures have not indicated the need for special education. Roberts tells the father he'll go ahead and start the boy in special education anyway. In the meantime, the father should secure a letter from the family's own medical authority, requesting special education placement. In such an action, the principal obtains a political friend in the student's father.

Similarly, discretionary authority may frequently be used to open up school enrollments, despite school district rules governing the allocation of pupils to schools in terms of attendance-area boundaries. When there is space available, when there is a previous relationship between a family and the school (e.g., a relative attends or has attended), and when there is clearly some legitimacy to the parental request (e.g., the family does live fairly close to the school but is just beyond the attendance boundary), then the principal will commonly be open and flexible in admissions decisions.

c. Orchestrating Community Involvement--As mentioned above, parental participation in the life of city schools appears to be greater than ever before. The "four-walls" interpretation of school life as a bastion of professional activity that is to be kept most carefully closed to all "outside" participation and influence has been replaced by a new attitude of much local involvement and a rather considered community responsiveness. Parents are now playing valued, formal roles in the instructional program, often as paid aides to teachers and staff, and very frequently as volunteers in areas closely associated with matters of classroom instruction as tutors, teacher aides, library assistants, and sponsors of special programs (e.g., Reading is Fundamental, RIF).

In roles less closely associated with instruction, parents are increasingly involved in school fund raising, pageants and school assemblies, field trips, and the sponsorship of extracurricular activities. In decision-making and governance at the school site-level, parent advisory councils are now concerned with an increasing range of resource allocation and programmatic decisions that were not long ago considered the responsibility of unfettered professionalism. The schools are, additionally, "reaching out" increasingly to parents through newsletters, home visits, recreation nights, and open houses.

Of importance to the principal in maintaining the stability of the school, however, is the combination of community involvement with very little, real parental power in school policymaking. As we have observed above, it can be suggested that the school principal is expected by the larger organization to be responsive to, but protect the school system from, community interests and demands. The principal must balance parental involvement against his or her need for authoritive control over the school. Principal Russell, for example, explains that he has a very active cadre of parent volunteers and that many persons from the neighborhood are interested in and are involved in the work of the school. Russell goes on to mention, however, that the school's formal, parent advisory council hasn't met much over the last few years--ever since the council began pushing to have a voice in the evaluation of the school's teachers. Principal Harper, in another example, complains about his difficulty in getting parents to become active in school affairs--mentioning that few persons attend parent advisory council meetings and that the council has even been unable, for two years now, to elect a council president. Harper indicates he is quite concerned at this moment, though, because a number of parents are very dissatisfied with one of the school's teachers and have threatened to bring their grievance to the attention of a higher-level administrator. Harper says: "I don't want them washing our linen in public like that."

## 4. Upgrading Staff Quality While Preventing Staff Conflict

There has been a good deal of interest in the give-and-take relationship between the school principal and his teaching staff. Waller (1932)[6] was among the first to outline a pattern of reciprocity between administrative and instructional personnel--a reciprocity based upon an essential conflict of interest between professional and bureaucratic norms in the midst of an organizational need for cooperative behavior. Both Becker (1961)[7] and Lortie (1969)[8] have similarly investigated the interactions of teachers and principals and the balance of power that exists between them. The principal, as Becker notes, is expected by his faculty to "back them up" and to respect their "professional independence."

The principal is also expected, by the larger organization, to supervise and evaluate his teaching staff--to upgrade the quality of instruction and to exercise overall instructional leadership within the school. Again, the principal is forced into a balancing role. Efforts to enhance the quality of teaching and the task performance of the school staff must be balanced against the need to stabilize the principal-staff relationship. Principal Greene, for example, attempted a serious and tough re-evaluation of her teachers. In the spring of the year, in her annual evaluation notices to individual teachers, she lowered many ratings. A sizable number of her faculty responded by applying immediately for transfer to other schools within the system.

The principal's balancing act (at least in most large-city contexts) must also be undertaken amidst constraints of legal and organizational authority. The teachers' union contract specifies clear limits upon class size, on-duty and off-duty hours, and the amount of extra work that can be expected of staff (e.g., curriculum committees, lunchroom supervision). Procedures for the evaluation and eventual dismissal of teachers are most elaborate, enormously time-consuming, and filled with organizational pitfalls. Additionally, a number of categories of school staff in many systems are not directly responsible to the building principal (e.g., maintenance and cafeteria personnel, plus a number of specialized teachers who move from school to school).

In the midst of staffing constraints the principal must nevertheless be responsive to and have sufficient flexibility available to care for, the demands that surface. Despite classes that are "up to the limit" in pupil enrollment, new arrivals must be accommodated. Despite an agreement on unassigned teacher time (e.g., "preparation periods"), the personnel available to the school must be used fully to insure that order prevails and the children are always supervised. Despite the assistance of clerks, assistant principals, aides, and others, the administrative work of the school demands that classroom teachers also cooperate freely in taking on committee assignments, club or activity sponsorship, pupil supervision duties (e.g., at sporting events, dances, festivals, before and after school), curriculum development, and the never-ending filling out of reports and classroom statistics.

In the course of sustaining a balanced relationship with the school staff, principals concentrate attention upon: (a) the communication of role performance expectations to the school staff; (b) the fulfillment of teacher expectations regarding professional autonomy, and (c) the development and maintenance of a reward system for cooperative behavior.

a. Communicating Principal Expectations--In efforts to enhance the quality of instruction, principals spend rather little time in inservice training or curriculum development. Although periods of inservice training are built into the annual calendar, both principals and teachers generally "go through the motions" of planning and carrying out teacher inservice--using the time very often for sales pitches from textbook publishers, for a talk by someone from "downtown," or for some administrative announcements and procedural explanations (e.g., an explanation of the special education provisions of PL 94-142). Similarly, classroom visitation and the supervision of instruction are not stressed very heavily by most principals. It is not uncommon to hear a principal mention that he feels guilty about the little time given to teacher observation, but a typical excuse is that one really doesn't accomplish much by "sitting in classrooms all day."

Principals do spend their energies on a variety of activities that seek to communicate to the faculty and staff thet the principal is very much around and "on top" of events in the school and that the principal's expectations of staff performance furthermore are being checked-up upon.

With the principal's many tours of the school environs throughout the day, there is a constant bobbing into and out of classes in session, a brief glance through the classroom door at activities underway inside, an occasional stop in the back of a room for a few minutes to watch a teacher briefly. Principal Bachman notes that it takes just a few seconds for him to tell whether learning is going on. Is the teacher standing or sitting? Is the room orderly and quietly at work or very noisy and obviously out-of-hand? Are the kids at their desks and working or is there too much movement around the room or into and out of the classroom? Are there books and papers or work-sheets in evidence? With the weaker teachers, says Bachman, he'll spend extra time--making sure they know his expectations and are managing their work well.

Many principals (both high school and elementary) also collect weekly lesson plans from their teachers. Although the plans may not be checked very carefully, the activity does communicate the message that the principal is interested in and is watching what's going on. At points of time in the day when teachers and staff must perform many "extra" duties (e.g., lunchroom supervision, pupil entry and exit at the beginning and end of each day), most principals "spot check" to make sure the staff is on station as scheduled and is performing correctly. Anyone who is not in place or is late in arriving on station is made aware that the principal has checked up.

b. Fulfilling Expectations of Teacher Autonomy--A fundamental norm of teacher-principal interaction is that of respect for the professional autonomy of the classroom teacher. One of the principal's key balancing activities is the protection he affords the teacher from "outside" interference and the actions he takes to "back the teacher up" in problematic situations.

Much professional autonomy is, of course, structured into the procedures and contractual obligations that surround the administrative setting. The union contract places clear and strict limits upon the principal in teacher evaluation, dismissal, and allocation of work assignments. Other school system regulations and guidelines are similarly careful to recognize boundaries that traditionally restrict the demands that can be made upon the teacher. Beyond these legal or contractual and procedural guarantees, however, the classroom teacher is rather often in need of the additional "protection" that the school principal can provide. Principal Andrews, for example, visited all ten of his school's new teachers just before the end of the first (fall) marking period, cautioning them to be sure they had lots of evidence to support each grade. Andrews cautioned each teacher that the pupils and their parents in this school aren't reluctant to question a grade, and the teacher "had, better make sure he's covered." Dr. Robinson, principal of the Copley School, encountered an angry parent who claimed her son's teacher had hit him across the nose with a ruler. After discussion of the incident, the parent and principal went to see the teacher. As they left the office, Dr. Robinson remarked in an aside: "I've told her before, 'put that ruler down.'" Robinson added, however, that she feels it's her responsibility to defend her teacher.

c. Rewarding Cooperative Behavior--Bridges (1970)[9] has described the extent to which the building administrator is in many ways much more of a "pawn" of organizational relationships than he is the origin of meaningful activity. Constrained by professional norms, the union contract, board rules, funding formulae, and state or federal legalities, the school principal frequently expresses a feeling of powerlessness. In a response to a survey by a local newspaper, one principal in the community under study said that the principal is really no more than a "toothless tiger. Every conceivable responsibility is placed on his shoulders, but he is not given sufficient authority to do the job."

Despite some severe restraints upon his capacities for rewarding and punishing, the principal does have some "hard currency" available for distribution to those who are most cooperative. In the midst of resource allocation by formula and job placement by central office directive, there are many decisions by principals, in the distribution of dollars and employment, that add significantly to their maintenance of authority. Principals Banks, Crowder, and Donnelly illustrate, below, three key mechanisms that can be used.

Item: Principal Banks receives a call from the district office, informing him that six teaching positions for the summer will be available for the faculty from his school. Banks, now off the phone, explains that a large number of his teachers have requested summer contracts and this is one area where he has an opportunity to "acquire a hold" over his faculty. Bank says it is totally his decision as to who receives a summer appointment, the teachers know this and it makes a difference--especially, of course, to those who have applied and need the money. In a few minutes, Mr. Banks leaves his office and begins a tour of classrooms to check with a number of teachers whom he is identifying for summer school, some of whom hadn't even applied. Upon return to the office, Banks says, "They were all excited."

Item: Mr. Crowder, principal of the Warner School, mentions that he finally received the approval needed to "firm up" the school's assistant principal position. Mrs. Stallings, the acting assistant, can now become a full-time assistant principal, freed from all classroom duties. What he has to do now though, says Crowder, is go through all of the motions of opening the job up to everyone and interviewing all of the eligible candidates. Thus, all last week he spent time interviewing people in his office. Some twenty-three persons applied and he gave them about fifteen to twenty minutes apiece--asking all applicants the same set of six questions. He remarks: "It was rather funny, of course, because I had to give Mrs. Stallings an interview too and we (he and Stallings) had sat down together earlier to put together the six questions." Crowder goes on to mention that he would have had to interview more people, but some who called bowed out when they found out there was an inside candidate. Now, says Crowder, he has to write up his evaluations and send his request for appointment of Stallings in to personnel. As soon as this goes through, he wants to move Mr. Wilson out of the classroom part-time to the adjustment teacher position that will become available. Wilson is a very sharp and hard-working young man who should be guided into administration.

Item: Principal Donnelly is roaming from one committee meeting to another, as his teachers meet after school in groups to develop and improve curricula. Donnelly explains that the faculty meet once each week after school for forty-five minutes. Participation is totally "voluntary"; however, says Donnelly, he does consider attendance and involvement in committee work in considering staff ratings for the year. On the way between classrooms, from one committee session to another, Donnelly remarks that the teacher chairing the group we just saw is doing a topnotch job--really enthusiastic. Donnelly says he gave her a "satisfactory" rating last year, and she came weeping into the office asking what she could do to raise her rating. Only the two highest ratings (superior and excellent) qualify a teacher for many opportunities for career advancement within the school system.

## 5. Summary

A key ingredient in the work-a-day world of the school principal is the need to balance role expectations of school improvement against expectations of control and stability. The principal must seek simultaneously to pursue organizational maintenance and enhancement objectives.

Our research would suggest that building principals employ a number of administrative strategies and interpret school system rules, procedures, and policies in such a manner as to accomplish this balancing role. In seeking to maintain order in their school buildings while simultaneously trying to enhance the school's atmosphere for learning, principals concentrate energy upon: (a) anticipating likely crises, problems, and occurrences; (b) effectively controlling events that do occur, and (c) enforcing school rules as guides to proper institutional behavior. In trying to foster parent and community involvement in the school while simultaneously maintaining a control over "outside" influences, principals employ strategies of: (a) using the community to protect areas of principalship authority and/or resource control, (b) using the discretionary prerogatives of the principal's office to build community support, and (c) orchestrating community involvement in such a fashion as to engender interest in the work of the school without generating school-community conflict.

In attempting to upgrade staff quality and improve instruction while preventing staff conflict, principals commonly concentrate much attention upon: (a) communicating the principal's expectations of staff performance, (b) fulfilling teacher expectations regarding professional autonomy, and (c) developing and maintaining a reward system for cooperative staff behavior.

## Footnotes

[1] Moore, M.T., "The Boundary-Spanning Role of the Urban School Principal," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1975.

[2] Sarason, S.B. The Future of the School and the Problem of Change (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971).

[3] Wolcott, H.F., The Man in the Principal's Office: An Ethnography (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973); also, "The Elementary School Principal: Notes from a Field Study," in Educational Organization and Administration, Donald, A. Erickson (ed.), (Berkeley, Calif.:McCutchan Publishing Corp., 1977): 512-541.

[4] Blumberg, A. and Greenfield, W. The Effective Principal: Perspectives on School Leadership (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1980).

[5] Mann, D., The Politics of Administrative Representation (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1976).

[6] Waller, W. The Sociology of Teaching,(New York: Wiley, 1932).

[7] Becker, H.S., "The Teacher in the Authority System of the Public School," Complex Organizations, Amitai Etzioni (ed.), (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), pp. 243-251.

[8] Lortie, D.C., "The Balance of Control and Autonomy in Elementary School Teaching," The Semi-Professions and Their Organization: Teachers, Nurses, Social Workers, Amitai Etzioni (ed.), (New York: The Free Press, 1969), pp. 1-53; see also, Schoolteacher (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975).

[9] Bridges, E.M., "Administrative Man: Origin or Pawn in Decision Making?" Educational Administration Quarterly 9 (1980): 7-25.

# V-B. THE TRANSFORMATION OF ATTITUDES:
## Emotional Changes in a Mini-Bureaucracy--A Case Study

### 1. Introduction

The principal in a large school bureaucracy receives many directives from the central office. Although each directive can be understood as a specific instruction with a limited purpose, it is also imbedded within the conceptual framework of school policy. In order for an instruction to be effective at the site level, it may be necessary for the faculty and staff at a specific school to comprehend the purpose and policy behind the directive. As unit leader, the principal is often the key person who can place a specific directive within the larger framework of school policy. To do so, the principal must introduce new ideas about schools and their purpose to the school's staff. Specific changes at the unit level that reflect these ideas can then be interpreted to the staff within this framework. Underlying this function is the belief that directives, even when carried out to the letter, may not have the effect that was intended if school staff do not interpret them within the spirit of the policies they reflect.

### 2. The Context of Attitudes

Principal Anderson called her assistant principal in charge of scheduling into her office, instructing him to bring along his schedule for the teacher aides. When he arrived, she told him that the district coordinator for bilingual teacher aides had visited the building the previous day. The coordinator had complained that Mrs. Garcia had too much hall duty in her schedule. Anderson said that Garcia's schedule must be changed so that "the amount of time she'll spend in the corridor is minimal." The coordinator really "harped on that," she emphasized.

Anderson invited her assistant to "sit down," saying that they would "go over this together." They examined the program schedule for all of the aides which included bilingual aides financed with money from the State, aides in training financed through government CETA funds, and regular aides who were part of the budgeted school program of the Board of Education. After studying the schedule, Anderson concluded, "We can't use Garcia this way. We'll put her on phones calling bilingual youngsters who are not in school. We'll put her to work getting students into those programs."

It became clear however that there was a good deal more that was wrong with the aides' schedule. The two regular aides who had been with the school for many years were assigned to office duty in the attendance office and the program office. The newer aides who were part of the bilingual and CETA programs spent most of the day guarding the halls and keeping exits secure. When questioned about these assignments, her assistant's reasoning was simple. The regular aides had worked in offices for years, knew the ropes and could be counted on to do their jobs. The newer aides were assigned to fill a need for greater security in the halls. He points out that the teachers refused to sit at the exits and guard the halls, the student monitors could not be given that responsibility, and that left the aides. "How could we cover our exits without the aides?" he asked, and added, "We do need security in this building."

Anderson responded by pointing out that, "we depend on the aides that have proven themselves." The new aides would like a chance to prove themselves, too. That way "they can get some of the arrangements that the old-timers have been able to get for themselves." She told him that frankly "You wouldn't want to be in the halls all day and neither would I." The aides who are in the halls all day resent those who never have hall duty. Furthermore, if these assignments are not balanced better, she warned, "We are going to have a grievance, because that's what it's boiling up to." She suggested that they revise the schedules by assigning the experienced aides some hall duty, putting the CETA aides in the office where they could be trained, and placing the bilingual aides under the supervision of the bilingual department chairman for more periods during the day. They agreed to meet as soon as possible with the experienced aides to explain the change in schedule to them. They also reviewed their schedules, analyzing when the lighter periods were in each office, when the experienced aides could be out, reasonably leaving a trainee in charge. Finally they began to identify specific office tasks that would be appropriate assignments for a trainee.

After the assistant principal left, Anderson provided the researcher with additional information related to the situation. She explained that the aides come to the job with different backgrounds and experiences. The two office aides were white females and one was a former teacher. Their skills were well developed and they were needed in the offices where they work. The other aides were mostly black and Latin. They do not have office skills or experience, but are eager to learn. They want the opportunity to grow in the job so that they can upgrade themselves within the job. In fact, the guidelines for the CETA program stressed that these jobs were supposed to be training positions that could move unskilled workers like corridor guards into more skilled kinds of positions like office work.

Later in the day the assistant principal returned to Anderson's office with one of the old-time aides, Mrs. Bocca. They sat at the conference table, which was in an alcove of the principal's office. Anderson wanted to know whether her assistant had filled Bocca in on the situation. Bocca nodded "yes." Anderson then said to Bocca, "What the whole thing boils down to is that you and Marie Johnson (the other old-timer) are burrs in everyone's side." She complimented Bocca by telling her that in comparison to the other, newer aides, "the skills are obviously not comparable, the things you are able to do are far greater then the other aides are able to do." Furthermore, she let Bocca know that her work was appreciated by the administrative staff. "We, as administrators of the school, look upon you as staff that we can count on." "But," she said, "Look at this, I want to show you something." Anderson then placed the aides' schedule on the table before Bocca, so that Bocca could see the different assignments of all the aides side by side. The principal pointed out that some aides were scheduled for hall duty period after period. "You know," she said, "having three periods in a row at an exit is really a bore."

Bocca responded by explaining how hard she worked, that even though she spent the day in the program office, she still was not able to finish and brought work home every night. She indicated that if she were given hall duty to satisfy the other aides, then she would fall even farther behind in her work. Once again Anderson assured Bocca that the contemplated change in schedule in no way reflected a lack of appreciation for her hard work. The reason they had to make changes was that the other aides have complained that assignments are not being distributed in an equitable manner. The "animosity is now building toward a grievance on behalf of the other aides." Anderson pointed to the schedule and did not mince words as she said that "anybody from the outside who would take a look at the program schedule for the aides would look and say that it's not fair." She said that the schedule must be re-written so that it is "more presentable." Anderson told Bocca, "The problem is that your assignment on this program sheet simply does not reflect the hard work that you do. You need to be assigned to a corridor in order to make this more equitable."

Anderson then turned the discussion to how they might make these changes with the least possible disturbance to Bocca's office duties. They discussed periods of the day when the office duties were lightest. They talked about chores that she did that a trainee might be able to learn. In this context, Bocca volunteered that she spent a couple of periods a day delivering materials to various rooms. Perhaps this activity might be combined with hall duty. Following this suggestion, her first period assignment was changed from "program office," to "corridor duty on the first floor." Bocca was pleased, saying, "Sure, I'm doing that anyway. There's no change; we're just calling it something else."

A few minutes later the assistant principal told Bocca that one aide was complaining that she was at exit five for three consecutive periods. This prompted Bocca to say, "Since Dora is complaining so much, give me exit five and then put her some place else during third period." They decided to put Dora in the library third period where she could help catalogue new books. Bocca cheerfully added, that exit five is near the program office, "that way if something comes up in the office and I am needed I can run over to the office, if someone is in dire need."

When the schedule changes were settled, Anderson moved to the training issue. She told Bocca, "you know, we rely on you very heavily. We need you to train somebody who will be your back-up." And then she added, "If you try and train somebody and they don't make it, then it's up to me to talk to them and tell them that they haven't made it.

Bocca was unhappy. She told Anderson that last year she tried to work with Garcia, but Garcia "could not alphabetize anything." Furthermore, when the other aides came into the office they "just sit and wait until you tell them exactly what to do." She complained that they have "no initiative for getting work done."

Anderson explained that "that may be," but that the purpose of the CETA program is to train people. She instructed Bocca that "the way to train people is to show them how to do the things that you want them to do. First you show them. Then you let them try to do it two or three times, and you watch them and see how they do. Then, if they can't do it after a while, you let me know that they're not capable of learning that skill." She explained that Bocca could not expect trainees to be able to *do* the office skills, but they needed to determine which aides would be able to *learn* office skills. Anderson stressed that the idea behind the CETA training program was to provide the opportunity to learn. "We have to try people."

Bocca said that she has tried before. She brought up Natalie who was supposed to help in the library, but "couldn't even read." Anderson countered by stressing that their responsibility was to offer the chance for the aides to get the new skills. Bocca was not won over. "I know what the problem is," she responded, "they feel it's discriminatory." "Well," Anderson sighed, "it *is* discriminatory, in a way."

Anderson continued to reinforce her position on this problem. "Now this aide that will be assigned to your office, if she isn't capable then that's one thing. But we really have to ask ourselves whether or not we're currently using her effectively. The changes we will make will be tentative. If somebody is not working out in a new assignment, then they won't stay there." Bocca was still unhappy. She complained, "The trouble with all these other aides is that they think that working in an office is easy. They don't really know what goes into this."

Later in the day the other old-time aide met with Anderson on the same issue. Anderson asked her to sit down at the conference table and introduced the problem by saying to Mrs. Johnson, "As you know, we've had a problem and you and Bocca are the targets." She added, "It's going to be a hassle unless I do something." She explained that the current programs did not look fair or equitable because it looked as though some people have better schedules than others. Bocca's schedule had already been changed. She would be at exit five during fifth period and in the corridors during the first periods. Anderson then told Johnson that she wanted her out of the attendance office during fifth and sixth periods. Also, Derek would be taking her place during fourth period.

Johnson explained that she had been working on student registration all week. She said of Derek, "If you put her in the attendance office, be sure that I'm in there at the same time." She felt that Derek could not be left alone because, "she can't even answer the phone to talk to anyone." Anderson said that they must give Derek a chance. She emphasized that either Derek would make the grade or she would lose the job. Anderson explained that she thought fourth period was a light time in the attendance office, which is why she chose that period to assign Derek. Johnson softened, telling Anderson that "Derek can handle the tardies."

Anderson pressed for more responsibility for Derek. She told Johnson, "Well, maybe she can handle the transfers out too." And Anderson added, "Teach her how to do it; spell it out to her in words of one syllable."

Johnson replied, "Well, yeah, but she messes it up and that's why I get upset."

Anderson told Johnson, "Well then you tell me when she messes it up. That's for me to deal with."

Anderson said Johnson had to be willing to be pulled out of the attendance office during fifth and sixth periods to cover hall duty when it was needed. Johnson said that she didn't mind the idea of hall duty. Then she added, "I wouldn't care if you put someone in there (the office) with some intelligence, but Derek doesn't have it."

Anderson told her, "Listen, if you give somebody a job and they do it wrong, then show them how to do it right. And watch them try to do it right. Then come to me. You've got to realize that it takes time to learn everything that's involved in working in an office."

Johnson replied, "I know, but they make mistakes and then the teachers come down yelling at me."

Anderson switched the subject, inquiring after Johnson's family. They talked briefly about recent weddings, births, etc.. Then Johnson wanted to know if the changes were going to start the next day. Anderson said, "yes," and concluded the meeting by saying, "I want you at exit one during fourth and fifth periods."

## 3. Comment

Prior to the visit of the district bilingual coordinator, the school's inexperienced aides were scheduled to guard halls and maintain security at building exits for most of the school day. Although this filled a gap in manpower at the school, it ignored the purpose behind the aide programs. The CETA aides were supposed to learn new skills, so that they could upgrade themselves and find office jobs elsewhere. The bilingual aides were supposed to directly assist students in bilingual classes. When it came to assigning work to these aides, these purposes were overlooked in favor of the need to guard hallways and provide security at the school's ten exits.

At the same time, two experienced aides were totally assigned to clerical duties in the school's attendance and program offices. In order to meet the demands of the aide coordinator, and head off a grievance by the CETA and bilingual aides, the principal changed the scheduling patterns for every school aide. Instead of assigning aides to either hall duty or office-classroom duty on the basis of experience, each aide was re-assigned a balance of hall duty and office-classroom duty. The re-assignment was seen as more equitable to the new aides and as providing them training opportunities to upgrade their skills.

Of course, principal Anderson had every right to reassign the aides. But she recognized that this action had elements that should be addressed if the stability in the aides' performance were to be maintained. To satisfy the CETA and bilingual aides, and help them re-focus on their duties instead of their shared complaints, it was necessary to reassign the experienced aides to some hall duty as well as to reduce the hall duty of the newer aides. By treating the old-timers with the same guidelines as the newer aides, Anderson reduced the appearance of hierarchy, an important consideration since the hierarchy also followed racial lines in this case.

Whereas it was more fair to remove the special privilege enjoyed by the old-timers, Anderson could not ignore the fact that the school's administrators counted on these old-timers to carry on with their office work. To maintain the productivity of the old-timers, Anderson took several steps to smooth their feelings in the face of change. They were invited to meet personally with Anderson to discuss the changes. In this context, much praise was given to their work. Appreciation for them by the administrators was plainly put; and it was emphasized that their services were sorely needed. Also, the extent of the changes were minimized. The administrators were careful to reassign the aides during the light periods of the day. Hall duties were selected that overlapped with the old-timer's current schedules. Both aides were unhappy about the changes, but were willing to go along because the conference informally reaffirmed their sense of being "special."

It is to Anderson's credit that she did not limit these changes to mere alterations in assignment that reduced the appearance of favoritism. Anderson went further, attempting to win over the old-timers and to obtain their help in establishing a valid training program for the CETA aides. She pressed them to actively train the new aides and help them upgrade their skills. She outlined a step by step training technique that the aides were to use. Two ground rules were established by Anderson to win the old-timers to the spirit of the training objective. The assignment of new aides to office work would be tentative. Furthermore, Anderson promised that if an aide failed to learn new skills after a reasonable training opportunity was extended, then the aide would be removed. It was more difficult to win over the old-timers on the training issue. They were afraid that productivity would suffer (things would be messed up by the new aides) and their time would be wasted. Yet, Anderson stood her ground. At the conclusion of each conference, it was clear to both old-timers that the re-assignment was more than for appearances. Both experienced aides would be expected to carry out the spirit of the training programs by extending opportunities to the new aides to learn office skills. In this manner Anderson attempted to enhance her staff. The enhancement took the form of training new aides in office skills, and thereby developing back-up personnel for the duties carried out by the old-timers.

Finally, and probably the most significant policy issue in this example, is the question of whether the inequitable distribution of assignments was motivated by race discrimination. This question is appropriate in as much as a hierarchy of assignment was evident, with the high status, office positions distributed to the white aides and the low status, guard duties assigned to the black and Latin aides. From the data available in this example, it is clear that the administrative team distributed assignments according to skill, and possibly also with regard to seniority. The old-timer was aware, however, that since the distribution of assignments also corresponded to race, "they feel it's discriminatory." It is not unusual to find policy on race discrimination in conflict with the seniority guidelines in a school system. The old-time white staff tend to argue for privilege on the basis of seniority; the newer black and Latin staff argues from the basis of equity.

Anderson was aware of the role that seniority assignments play in perpetuating the distribution of privilege along racial lines. This is evident in her observation that the assignment process for aides "is discriminatory, in a way." By pressing for training opportunities that would distribute office skills among aides of all races, she was removing the rationale for keeping some aides in the office and others guarding the halls. Once the newer aides had office skills, they could be assigned a balanced schedule on the basis of those skills. Once this was possible, the skill distribution that made inequitable schedules rational would disappear. Finally, by resisting the old-timer's attempt to brand the newer aides as unteachable, she was affirming the essential rationale for equity in all organizations--that when given the opportunity, persons will demonstrate their capacity, and appropriate ability will be evident among members from all racial groups.

We see from the above series of episodes a manifestation of what might be called imaginative management, namely, using the prosaic occasion of reassigning duties as a medium for changing two employees' attitudes toward their work, toward their colleagues, and toward the larger ethic of the organization. Seniority has its privileges, yes, but a larger purpose is being served if other criteria are allowed to operate. The two women accepted the changes and made adjustments in their own work patterns. But in doing so, they were assisted by the principal in transforming their attitudes toward their fellow workers and the needs of the larger enterprise.

## V-C. CLIMATE CONTROL:
## Two Case Studies of Instructional Leadership by Indirection

### 1. Introduction

The acid test of any school is whether its students learn appropriate coursework within a reasonable period of time. Principals have the responsibility of judging whether teachers can and do teach well. Much literature in education administration is therefore devoted to the selection, evaluation and improvement of a school's faculty. The principals in this study did not devote much time to these supervising activities. In comparison, much more time was spent on student discipline, parent contact and general monitoring of the school building.

It became apparent, over the course of the study, that the principals believed that these non-supervisory activities were important supports for student achievement. An implicit division of labor was in effect. Teachers were responsible for presenting lessons, and getting students to pay attention and participate in learning activities. The principal supervised the teachers, but was additionally responsible for establishing and maintaining a tone in the school building that was supportive of the learning activity that occurred in classes. The two case studies in this chapter exemplify two principals' understanding of this widely accepted responsibility. They also indicate some specific efforts they made to improve and maintain a climate that they believed to be supportive of instruction.

### 2. Prototype A

When Lila Hutchens became principal at the Grove Elementary School, things had been out of control for some time. The last permanently assigned principal had been removed from his position by the Board of Education. He left, taking every school record and administrative document with him. During the intervening two years the vacancy was filled with interim principals. None of them did much to establish an administrative presence. For those who wonder what a school might be like if there were no principal, the Grove school offered some possible insight.

The teachers took responsibility only for their own classroom and students, when school was in session. The teachers sat in the faculty lounge until the class bell. Then they went to their classrooms where some students waited and others still straggled inside. Misbehaving pupils were shooed from the class. They wandered in the halls where there was no supervision. At recess, students rushed unescorted from their classes to the playground. Teachers went to the lounge. The same pattern was followed at lunchtime when students either left for home or ate in the cafeteria. As far as Hutchens could tell, no textbook had been ordered for the school in two years. The building, built in a classical style at the turn of the century, was in disrepair. Many windows were broken. Walls and floors in one hallway were grime covered and water stained. The desks and chairs, which were permanently bolted to the floor, were badly broken and marred. One of Hutchen's first acts as principal was to stop random student movement in the halls and restore order to the school's public areas.

Hutchens established rules to regulate student movement to and from classrooms. No student could leave a class without the teacher's permission. Students with permission would carry a pass with them in the halls. Students would remain on the playground before school, at recess and after lunch until their teachers joined them there and escorted them into the building. Students could only use the door and play areas to which they were assigned. Students would gather in class groups on the playground to wait for their teachers. After class, teachers would escort their students through the halls and out of the building for recess, lunch or to go home after the school day.

To enforce these rules, Hutchens roamed the school, reminding students and teachers of their duties. She greeted students and teachers each morning on the playground before they entered the building. She stood in hallways and at the exits, making sure that students did not enter the building early and that they used the correct door when they did come inside with their teachers. She asked to see passes as students walked in the halls during class time. She frequently met with students who broke the new rules, explaining the rules to them and letting them know that rules would be enforced. When students repeatedly broke the rules, she met with their parents and she explained the rules to them. Further offenses were rewarded with suspension and additional parent conferences. All outsiders were forbidden to enter the school without first securing a permit in the central office. No permits were issued to past students or students who did not attend the school. Hutchens stood in the hallway and near the exits at recess, lunch and after school. She also toured the school at least once a day during class time.

At Hutchen's invitation, social work students from a nearby university and a social service agency visited the school. As part of their training, they initiated a counseling program for children who were constantly breaking school rules. Hutchens also took steps to remove the most troublesome students from regular classrooms. They and their parents were encouraged to apply for special programs available at other campuses. She requested that they be tested by a school psychologist in preparation for removing them from regular classes and placing them in special classes for disorderly students.

Although Hutchens handled the discipline problems herself, she trained the school clerks to handle some of the frequent, routine student problems. For example, when a student fell and skinned her knee during recess, the clerks were directed to look up the child's emergency phone number and to notify her parents.

Hutchens also tackled the rundown, neglected appearance of the school. After much complaining to the district office, a new engineer was assigned to the building. With his arrival, windows were replaced and the building scrubbed. Hutchens instructed teachers to work with students to plan bulletin boards for the hallways. She worked with a group of parents and teachers to buy paint and work after hours to paint the more unsightly areas.

She began to build a curriculum resource area in one corner of her large office. Here she stored catalogues and samples of textbooks and teaching materials. She formed teachers curriculum groups which invited publisher representatives to make presentations at faculty meetings. Another problem she faced was that the teachers who had been at Grove for years did not follow the Board of Education curriculum guidebook. Neither did they use the criterion reference tests that had been developed for system wide use in reading for all elementary schools. To introduce the official materials to these teachers, Hutchens enlisted the help of two newly assigned teachers. These newcomers were familiar with the materials, learning objectives and tests used throughout the system. They shared their knowledge and experience with the other teachers informally in the lounge and in scheduled workshops.

Hutchens explained that it was her philosophy to be available to teachers and children. She wanted them to feel that "someone cares." Although this approach allowed students and teachers to disrupt her continually during the school day, she felt that it was the only way to make the changes she had introduced become the normal routine in the school. The paperwork she was expected to complete, especially that which required concentrated periods of time and much care, could not be done during school hours. It was her habit, therefore, to stay after the others had left to work at her desk in the late afternoon, and to bring unfinished items home. She spent many evening and weekend hours at home working on these tasks. These were the two sides to her principalship. While school was in session, she was constantly on the move in the halls, on the playground, seeing that her routines were followed. After the school had quieted down in the afternoon after dismissal, she turned her attention to reports and other paperwork.

Hutchen's principalship followed a theme that was also expressed by other subjects. This was that the principal must concentrate on the relationship between students and the school as a whole. When students do not feel a part of the school, and do not follow school norms and routines, then their entire sense of membership is confined to their own class and their classroom teacher. When the authority relationship with one's classroom teacher is broken, then students are likely to move, uncontrolled, in class and through the school. Even when a teacher has an excellent rapport with the students in class, the students may experience the teacher's absence as a lifting of limits unless more general limits are part of the building routines. The authority to enforce more general limits rests with the principal, who must extend it effectively to all adults in the faculty and staff. The following example illustrates this point.

One early afternoon, three girls burst into Hutchens' office. They told her that upstairs, a high school boy had entered the classroom where there was a substitute teacher. They said he was sitting in class, throwing things at people. The substitute had lost control.

Hutchens rushed upstairs to the second floor. A female teacher was standing, helpless in front of the class. Students were walking and running about at will, talking and shouting to one another. When Hutchens entered the room she told the students to get "into your own seats." Immediately she approached the teacher's desk and looked for the seating chart. It was not there, so she asked each child, in turn, to give their name. After completing a new seating chart, she asked the class, "Where is your work?"

Hutchens told the students to pay attention. Even though their regular teacher was absent, they still had to behave in the same proper manner with the substitute. She checked the classroom and the cloakroom for the high school student. There was none. Before leaving the room she told the substitute to use the seating chart to be sure that no other students came into the room. The substitute began to complain that the students were throwing paper clips. Hutchens told the students to immediately pick up any paper clips that were on the floor near their seat. Then she left and returned to her office.

About one-half hour later, Hutchens noticed that two boys from the class were running down the hall. She called to them and asked why they were not in class. They said they were just now returning from the bathroom. She reminded them that they were supposed to have a pass if they were in the halls. Suspecting that students were walking out of class and roaming the building, she went back upstairs. Once again, the students were all over the place, out of their seats. The moment they saw Hutchens, however, they returned to their seats. She told two boys to pick up some paper that was scattered around their desks on the floor. She checked the seating chart to learn who was missing. She arbitrated a fight between a girl and a boy.

She checked the halls outside the classroom, then returned to verify that the students were still quiet inside. She walked among them, up and down the rows of desks. She told the substitute that she wanted the names of students who did not complete the day's assignment. She reminded the substitute that no more students should leave the classroom. On the way back to her office, Hutchens spotted several more students from the class and directed them to return.

At one point during the study, Hutchens turned to the researcher and remarked, "If I were younger, I could not do this job." She felt that it took her combined experience of on the job training at other schools to know what to do in a school where one was starting from scratch, administratively. It was with great pride, therefore, that Hutchens announced at the end of the first year that reading scores in her school were up 35% from the previous year's. She felt that her relentless efforts to establish school-wide order and routine had begun to pay off.

### 3. Prototype B

The Spring Elementary School is a turn of the century building with a bright, friendly atmosphere. The school was completely rehabilitated within the past five years. The addition of modern lighting, fresh paint and numerous repairs enhanced the generous proportion of classrooms and hallways. Many bulletin boards and display areas decorate the public areas.

The spacious main hall has been equipped with tables and chairs where volunteer tutors meet with students before school. Welcome signs greet visitors in Spanish and English. It is a large school, serving nearly 1000 students from Kindergarten through eighth grade.

It is also a strictly neighborhood school. The houses and two flats of white families from the working and middle classes make up most of the neighborhood. Although many Asian, Middle Eastern and Latin children can be seen in the hallways, the parent council and PTA leadership is firmly held by the white group. This group is against busing students out of the neighborhood to achieve integration. When Jose Lopez was assigned as principal he met several times with these parents. They made it clear that they expected the principal of their school to be strict and a strong disciplinarian. He was to suspend any student who caused trouble, even for minor infractions. They spoke glowingly of his predecessor who supervised the playground, using a bull horn to call out to students engaged in rowdy play or who trespassed into the wrong play area. He soon learned that he would be held responsible for any trouble at the school. He also realized that many parents watched the playground from their windows, looking to see whether he was there enforcing the rules. They liked a principal they could see "on the job."

Another group that greeted Lopez when he became principal was his administrative team. Three white females who comprised the team were the assistant principal (and learning disabilities teacher), the reading teacher and the adjustment teacher.[1] Generally referred to by Lopez as "the girls in 101," they kept a pot of hot coffee and a generous supply of fresh rolls in their busy, friendly office. Lopez explained that they all had been at Spring school for many years. They functioned as his "brain trust" during his first year as principal. They offered advice, let him know when he was "stepping on someone's toes" and filled him in on "any scuttlebutt" that was "going around." He respected their abilities in their specialized areas and felt that they were a staff he could "fall back on." In a similar vein, his clerk knew the ropes and could handle the paperwork and clerical routines of the school. The faculty was experienced and, he felt, generally competent. The students' reading scores were respectable, placing the school's academic record well above average, though not at the very top.

As principal, Lopez spent most of his time looking for any trouble that might be smoldering and putting it out before it spread. He told the researcher that he was aware that most principals let their freed assistant principal handle discipline matters. He pointed out that his assistant principal was a teaching specialist whose duties were needed in that area. He preferred to leave curriculum and instructional matters to the "brain trust," while he handled the discipline. His approach included several patterns. He personally handled any disciplinary referral made by teachers or other staff. He always personally arbitrated problems that arose between teachers and parents. He was a dependable and frequent presence throughout the school building and playgrounds.

Lopez conducted three or four tours of the school each day. These reconnaissance "walks" took him by every classroom on every floor. He also checked washrooms and the cafeteria/auditorium areas. Before school started, he was sure to verify that students who had been admitted early to see their teachers had gone to their classrooms and that the teachers were with them. He also checked in on the "breakfast gang" in the cafeteria. He spoke with the cafeteria worker and the small group of children who participated in the free breakfast program. He returned to his office and checked with the clerk to be sure there was a teacher in each class, but left the securing and assigning of substitute teachers to her discretion. When classes started, he looked in on all classrooms where there were substitutes. He commented that he liked to "show up" in these classes.

When parents entered the school, he spoke with them personally about the reason for their visit. Spanish speaking parents looked to him to translate bureaucratic matters for them. When parents telephoned the school, he took the call. One parent told him at an open house that his daughter was receiving obscene phone calls because someone had written her name and phone number on one of the tables in the school's library. The next morning Lopez went to the library, checked the tables and scraped out the offending words. When children were ill or injured, Lopez personally telephoned the parents.

At recess, Lopez followed his predecessor's example and carried the bull horn to the playground. He called to students to be less rowdy and stopped fights. After recess, when students were forming lines to enter the building with their class, he called to them to be orderly. He explained that children tend to "push and shove" at these times because they are "jockeying for position," in lines. He would remind them that the "bell has rung," and to "get in line," and "make the line straight" and "face front."

At lunchtime, Lopez took his place on the stage above the tables and benches where the students sat. He hooked up a microphone to the stage sound system and supervised. Students waited with their class at their table until he called them to get in line to buy milk. When students misbehaved, he called them by name and they had to finish eating their lunch at the base of the stage. After lunch the misbehavers went to the principal's office instead of to the playground. When the students finished eating, he dismissed one class at a time to go to the playground. On rainy days, he distributed BINGO cards and called out numbers over the microphone. After the play period, he allowed the misbehavers who waited in his office to go to class.

Lopez personally announced any departure from the usual school routine. When an indoor recess was necessary because of bad weather, he announced the fact himself over the school intercom. He personally made other announcements, such as reminders for school representatives to attend the student council meeting. He also organized all special events. When some classes were invited to attend a film because their students had the best attendance records, he ordered the films, notified the teachers and ran the movie projector himself.

In addition to these daily routines, Lopez met with students who had been referred for discipline. His most consistent tools during these conferences were the threat of suspension and the threat that their parents might be notified of their misbehavior. Through a masterful use of these two tools, he was able to gain the cooperation of most students. During his first year at Spring, in fact, he suspended only one student. These disciplinary conferences eventually convinced both parents and teachers that he was a strong disciplinarian. The following examples illustrate his use of these tools with students from several age levels.

a. Example One--A teacher aide who was supervising students during recess sent Tom to the office for playing with matches. After speaking with the aide to learn what happened, Lopez invited Tom into his office. He took a blank index card from his file and wrote down Tom's name, telephone number and address. Then he looked up from the card and asked Tom to "Tell me how it happened."

Tom explained that he saw a book of matches on the playground, so he picked it up. He lit them and then he dropped them. Then his friend hit him, so he threw the matches at his friend. Unfortunately, they hit a girl instead. "But," he added, "The pack was already out," when he threw it.

Lopez sat for a few minutes in silence. Finally, he said, "You know, even though the matches are out, they're still hot."

Tom tried to defend himself by saying, "But I didn't mean for them to land on her."

Lopez told him, "Well, I know. But, one thing led to another which led to another. If you hadn't lit the matches, you wouldn't have thrown them at your friend and they wouldn't have hit the girl. It's lucky for you that the girl was not burned." Then he added, "Maybe tomorrow a parent will come and complain that a boy burned their daughter. I'll have your name here and that way I won't have to come looking all over the school for you." Lopez handed Tom a pass to return to his class. As Tom left Lopez added, "We'll call you if we have any reports."

b. Example Two--Lopez read a note that a boy brought to the office from his teacher. The note explained that Roger was throwing crayons. Lopez invited Roger, a second grader, into his office and solemnly completed an index card as Roger answered the routine questions. Then Lopez turned to Roger and said, "I understand that you were throwing crayons in your class."

Roger denied it, claiming instead that "I was throwing an eraser."

"Was it a pencil eraser or a blackboard eraser?" Lopez asked.

Roger held up his thumb and forefinger, indicating a small eraser.

"Well, why were you throwing it?" Lopez wanted to know.

Roger said that a girl was putting paper by his desk.

Lopez tried to discover what this was all about. He prodded Roger by saying "So, this girl was putting papers on your desk?"

"Yes," Roger said.

Lopez was silent for a moment. Then he asked Roger, "Your mother, did she say to throw erasers at this girl?"

"No," Roger answered.

Somewhat sarcastically Lopez continued, "Oh, then your father was the one who said to throw erasers?"

"No," Roger answered.

"Well then, who did say it?" Lopez wanted to know.

"No one," Roger told him.

"Well," said Lopez, "Then you must have told yourself to throw them. Why did you tell yourself to throw them? Don't you have any control? Who should be punished for your throwing them?"

"Me," Roger said. "I should be punished."

"Not your mother or your father, but you." Lopez reiterated. And then he wanted to know when Roger had gym class.

Roger did not know, so Lopez asked for Roger's room number and went to check his schedule. Meanwhile, Lopez explained that he will write a note to Roger's teacher that said Roger was not to have gym class this week.

As Lopez finished writing the note he asked Roger, "Now who is supposed to be punished for the erasers?"

"Me," Roger replied.

Lopez handed Roger the note and sent him back to class.

c. Example Three--When Martin came into the principal's office with the playground supervisor, the skin beneath his right eye was already beginning to darken. Lopez questioned Martin about what happened. Martin explained that Jerry had pushed him into some bushes. As he got up Jerry hit him in the face. Lopez motioned for Martin to sit in the outer office as Jerry entered from the hallway. Lopez invited Jerry into the principal's office, closed the door and completed the usual index card.

Jerry rushed to tell his side of the story. He said that several other boys were there and they were all pushing one another into the bushes. It was a joke and everyone was laughing. But when Martin was pushed into the bushes he got mad. Seeing that Martin was mad, Jerry pushed him into the bushes again, and then "I hit him," Jerry said.

Lopez asked Jerry, "So how do you feel?"

Jerry was silent.

"You must feel something. You know this is not an everyday occurrence with you," Lopez told him.

"Well, we did it for a joke," Jerry answered.

"What happened to your good nature, if it was a joke?" Lopez wanted to know.

Jerry began to cry. "I didn't do nothing," he whined.

"You know," Lopez said, "sometimes the neighbors call about boys being in their bushes. You weren't satisfied to simply push him into the bushes. Do you see what you did to his eye?"

"Yes," Jerry replied.

"How do you feel about that? How would your mother feel?" Lopez wanted to know.

Jerry was silent.

"Are you proud?" Lopez asked.

"No," Jerry answered.

"I could call your mother. I could suspend you." Lopez explained. "What should we do about it? Do you have any suggestions? You could apologize, but will Martin accept it? I don't know how angry Martin is with you. Shall we try an apology?"

Jerry, who had been looking down at his hands and silently crying answers, "Yes."

Lopez went to the door and asked Martin to join them in the principal's office. He asked Martin, "What should we do? Should we call his mother?"

"Yes," Martin said.

"Should I suspend him?" Lopez asked.

Martin was silent.

"Will you accept an apology?" Lopez wanted to know.

"Yes," Martin said.

"Well, what's it going to be?" Lopez asked seriously.

"You could suspend him." Martin replied.

"Would it make you feel better?" Lopez inquired.

"Yes," Martin said.

Then Lopez asked Martin how Jerry might feel about being suspended. "Would it make Jerry happy? Would it make his parents happy?" He added, "What if after the suspension he would try to get you again?"

"Then I'll get somebody to get him," Martin said excitedly.

"Well, we'll have a small war. Do we want that?" Lopez asked.

"No," Martin responded. He thought for a few moments and then suggested to Lopez, "You could keep him in from recess for a few weeks."

Lopez turned to Jerry and asked, "Would you rather stay in from recess than be suspended?"

"Yes," Jerry said.

The boys agreed on this punishment and they promised to apologize. Lopez sent Jerry back to his class with a note instructing the teacher to keep him in from recess. He told Martin to sit in the principal's outer office and hold ice on his eye until the swelling was reduced.

After this incident, Lopez took a tour of the school. The researcher inquired how he began these "walks," as he called them. He explained that years ago he was an assistant principal in another elementary school. The principal he served under took these walks and that was where Lopez learned about it. The researcher also asked how Lopez learned to handle student conferences on discipline problems. Lopez replied that he learned by doing it over and over as an assistant principal in charge of discipline. Eventually a principal developed a style that worked in most cases, Lopez explained.

## 4. Comment

These cases illustrate many aspects of the principal's responsibility for creating a school atmosphere that they believe will support classroom learning. Principals structure the order of movement of students in the halls, playground and other public areas of the school. This is mainly accomplished through rules that regulate behavior in these areas and through widely accepted norms for student behavior. An important norm for student behavior is the expectation that they obey directives issued by any adult on the faculty or staff. Students must recognize the authority of all adults, not just that of their own teacher and the principal.

Principals arrange for the maintenance of a building. They set the schedule. Any variations from the regular schedule are either initiated or approved by the principal. The principal decides whether the weather is bad enough to hold recess indoors. The principal adjusts the schedule to make space for an assembly. Textbooks and other instructional materials are ordered by the principal. In this way new structure and resources are introduced into normal school patterns.

The principal's office is the traditional destination of misbehaving students. Here, the principal meets with students and urges them to follow the school's rules and norms. The principal instructs the misbehavers that they must participate in the school's social system, that they cannot be a law unto themselves. The principal initiates steps to remove chronic, extremely disorderly students from regular classes. They regulate access to the school building. As a general rule, outsiders can only enter the building with the principal's permission. Non-students are usually denied entry because they may break rules and norms unawares, or, worse, intentionally undermine the school's sense of order. Principals serve as a buffer between teachers and parents. They negotiate conflicts and do not allow parents to disrupt learning activities.

The ways in which principals meet these responsibilities are varied. The school situation and the principal's own style have a great effect on the means selected. There are some general means of establishing and maintaining a school's climate, however, that were widely shared by the principals in this study.

First, the principal was a "presence" within the school. This presence was a concrete representation of the authority behind rules and norms. The principal listened and looked for misbehavior. The sense that one would be noticed if one broke the normal pattern of behavior was believed to be the essence of enforcing order and routine.

Second, the principal knew how to act to process administrative decisions in the larger school system. This included arranging for testing and placing special education students, ordering textbooks and other supplies, and submitting eligibility documents for a school's athletic team.

Third, the principal built a mental image of the entire school that was based on frequent exposure to the events and people in the building and on the playground. This reservoir of knowledge about the school,its customs and people helped the principal solve problems and take initiative. The principal knew for example, the places and times when trouble was apt to break out. When possible, the principal was on-the-spot to assert the presence of order and authority. Lopez knew that when students formed lines during recess they often pushed and shoved as they jockeyed for position in line. He stood guard and stopped fights by shouting a halt to rowdy outbursts.

Fourth, the principal created and established a system for administering discipline in the school. Lopez's index cards were a good example of such a system. Students learned that there was a written record of their misbehavior. This record would also be useful administratively if decisions were appealed at a higher level. The system also included a method to inform teachers and staff how the principal responded to a referral.

The individual principal developed each of these tools on the job. In some cases they copied a technique they observed another principal using. District meetings and bulletins from the central office helped keep principals up to date on forms, deadlines, routing and other elements in processing administrative decisions. Most principals developed systems that work for them by repeatedly facing situations as they developed.

Of course, maintaining order and establishing a working atmosphere was but one of a principal's responsibilities. The completion of reports and other paper work was another major responsibility. The feeling of one principal, that the pace and state of mind required for paperwork was not compatible with the active process of maintaining a climate of order, was shared by many principals in this study. The bifurcation of the principalship into active and sedentary sides is a dimension of the job that requires special skill and attention.

## Footnotes

[1] In the Chicago system the adjustment teacher is responsible for special testing, placement and records of student achievement.

# CHAPTER VI

# PRINCIPALING AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE COMMUNITY

# VI-A. SOCIALIZING THE CLIENTS:
## Shaping Community Expectations

### 1. Introduction

Principals spend some 5 percent of their time interacting with persons from the immediate community, usually the parents of youngsters in their respective schools. Often the contact is initiated by the parent, and the principal is in a reactive position. It may be a request for information or assistance, or a complaint concerning a teacher or other pupils in the school, or a complication developing out of the school's program and student activity.

Alternatively, many contacts are initiated by the principal and are part of a formal structure established by the school system to insure community involvement. Typically these interactions: (a) are required for pupil placement in special education under the provisions of PL 94-142, or (b) grow out of parental advisement within the framework of the PTA or the advisory council provisions of some federally-funded programs, or (c) accrue as a consequence of utilizing parent volunteers in some programmatic areas (e.g., Reading is Fundamental-RIF). Other, more informal contacts initiated by the principal most often involve episodic matters of pupil behavior, achievement, or illness, or special requests from the principal for parental assistance (e.g., field trip supervision).

Throughout the range of parent and community interactions, the principal is actively engaged in shaping and guiding (socializing) community expectations. The layman has always harbored grand fantasies as to the power of the public school. The bulk of these expectations can never be satisfied, even under the best of circumstances. The principal's managerial work includes de-educating the public about the school's capabilities, and re-educating parents and other community people as to just what they can and cannot expect from their local school.

This socializing role has been discovered in other research on individuals who work at the boundary between an organization and its key clientele. Blau's "classic" study (1963)[1] of bureaucrat-client interaction in an employment office, Skolnick's (1960)[2] research into the decisions of patrolmen while "on-the-beat", and Prottas' (1979)[3] more recent investigation of "people-processing" in a variety of public service agencies show that client behavior and attitude is differentially shaped and rewarded by those in boundary-spanning roles--in a manner that serves to protect the larger organization from unpredictability and uncertainty. Similarly Katz and Eisenstadt (1973)[4] have provided a fascinating account of how new immigrants to Israel were socialized by persons in client-service roles. Israeli bus drivers, for example, would step down from their buses to teach new arrivals how to queue and would carefully explain that the bus cannot transport each individual to the door of his or her destination but must operate only between designated bus stopping points.

In our study of school principals, the socializing role is manifest in three key areas. These are: First, efforts to mold parental expectations vis-a-vis the school and to guide parental behavior; second, efforts to help parents with special, non-school problems; and third, efforts to foster and orchestrate parental involvement in the work of the school.

## 2. Molding Parental Expectations

Few public service organizations enjoy the active concern of their key clientele as much as the public school. The lives of children, the habits and attitudes of a lifetime, the "life chances" and societal opportunities that become available over the years of an uncertain future are much affected, in the eyes of most parents, by the nature of the elementary and secondary school experience. The response of the school to the needs and personalities of their offspring is central to both the responsibility and the reward that constitutes "parenting."

Unchecked, however, the press of parental concern could swamp the teaching and administrative staff in a morass of special appeals, explanations of action, and unusual "cases." One key activity of the building principal, therefore, is the molding of expectation and the guiding of parental interest in such a way as to channel client behavior into acceptable and manageable styles.

A central focus of the principalship, in this regard, is a screening of parental demands from the teaching staff while simultaneously being responsive to parental needs and concerns. Teachers expect principals additionally to respect and assist their autonomy, their freedom to teach unhindered by parental control. Mrs. Jenkins, a parent, is concerned, for example, about her son's declining grades, and asks her son's teacher to send home a weekly report on the boy's progress. The principal, James Richards, explains to the mother that the Union contract requires teachers to report upon each child's progress only once every ten weeks; he therefore cannot ask for weekly summaries. Richards tells the mother that he, personally, however, will check on the boy's progress from time to time and give the mother an occasional call.

Principals will similarly "cool off" parental demands in areas such as disciplinary action, homework or grading policy, teaching style, and curriculum emphasis--areas in which organizational norms commonly call again for the principal to "back the teacher up." Such "cooling off" procedures require a good deal of the principal's time listening to upset parents and providing a sympathetic ear without compromising organizational or professional values. An example of the failure of one principal to perform this role satisfactorily (in the eyes of his staff) was observed at the Rockland School. Mrs. Arnold, having just learned that her son has been consistently truant from school, angrily asks the principal why parents are not informed when youngsters have been absent several days in a row. Rokach, the principal, tells Mrs. Arnold placatingly that he will ask the classroom teacher to do this for the mother. Later, when he communicates the mother's request to the teacher (Mrs. Samuels), she consents grudgingly, asking why a truant officer or the school administration cannot provide this service and expressing her disgust at the "extra duty" that Rokach has unthinkingly assigned to her.

A second, similar expectation-molding activity of the principal is the establishment of limits to school responsiveness. These limits are often interpreted and applied in a manner that communicates "proper" parental and pupil behavior vis-a-vis the school. At an "open house", for example, a student in trouble asks Principal Moore to give some time that evening to a meeting with himself and his father. Moore says no, he doesn't have time and open houses are not for this purpose; the father must come in on Monday as planned. The student complains that his father will have to give up a day of work to come to the school on Monday, and his father is very displeased. Moore responds: "You should have thought of that before getting into trouble."

A similar response is given by Principal Rutledge to a parent who is complaining that a gym teacher has refused to accept her request for an excuse from gym for her daughter. The gym teacher claims that the required physician's statement must be written on a proper Board of Education form rather than on a separate prescription note. Rutledge mumbles that the prescription note could probably just be stapled to the form but goes off to check with the gym teacher before adopting that solution. The gym teacher explains, privately, that the family has been a problem for him and that the girl has been bragging to her friends that she is about to be exempted from P.E.. Rutledge returns to the waiting parent and explains that there is nothing the school can do, the physician's statement must appear on the form (Initially reported in Crowson and Porter-Gehrie, 1980, p. 62).[5]

### 3. Helping Parents with Special Non-school Problems

A significant and time consuming aspect of principaling in large-city schools is the helping relationship that principals establish with parents and pupils in dealing with "welfare needs." The areas of involvement are wide-ranging, and run far beyond what might be considered the typical responsibility of the local school official. Much attention is given to adequate clothing and good health. Principals will especially take time to help youngsters find clothes necessary to school participation (e.g., tennis shoes, warm coats) and will assist parents with access to needed medical and psychiatric services that are available (e.g., a free eye clinic) in various parts of the city. The helping activity of the principal also frequently involves attention to extensions of educational opportunity to particular families. A gifted child is assisted in gaining admission to a special math program at another school. Summer school programs are located for pupils who are short of needed credits for graduation or who are in grave need of extra tutorials in reading.

The attention of the principal often, however, goes far beyond these "simple" school-related welfare services. Principals may be observed helping parents interpret and fill out an insurance form for reimbursement for doctor's expenses, assisting parents with legal and police problems, intervening and assisting in marital disputes (e.g., a child custody battle), offering help to parents in coping with language problems, and entering deeply into the special crises faced by some children and their families (e.g., a child repeatedly threatening suicide, a youngster who is an habitual runaway, a "good kid" who has been engaged in thievery). Occasionally a principal may come to regret involvement in a matter that later "gets out of hand," but most often the assistance provided is valued and appropriate.

Many principals will, in addition, go beyond helping actions to provide outright protection for parents and pupils. A football player, for example, fails to return home all night after a school dance, and the high school principal "calls around" (including calls to the student's known girl friends) to locate his whereabouts. A principal in an Hispanic community turns down a request from a television producer for two Latin boys to be suggested for parts in a forthcoming film. The principal has discovered that the story involved the "shakedown" of a white youngster by Latins, and he doesn't like it. An elementary principal keeps an eye on a rather heavy-set boy in the school, and takes food (e.g., a bag of popcorn or some candy) away from him periodically.

### 4. Guiding Parental Involvement

Opportunities for parental access to schools have expanded. Formal structures for parent involvement, in an advisory capacity, are now well established as part of the procedural requirements of many state, federal, and even locally established programs. Employment initiatives (particularly CETA) have increased the roles of community residents as aides or paraprofessionals. Informal access has expanded through an increased use of parent voluntarism and an opening up of opportunities for classroom observation by parents.

In spite of enhanced opportunities for parental access, building principals still find that much of their attention must be given to encouraging greater parental interest and participation in the life of the school. Schools vary widely in the extent of parental concern and involvement. In situations where there is a concern for and an attempt at increased involvement, we find that principals schedule frequent "festivals" and PTA meetings that are centered on some form of pupil performance (a "hook" to get parents to show). Not uncommon also are informal "coffees" with parents in their homes, efforts to encourage parent participation as sponsors of field trips for pupils, and efforts to encourage an active fundraising effort (e.g., candy sales, bakery goods exchanges, Christmas bazaars) by parents on behalf of the school. In schools with effective levels of interaction with parents and with the surrounding community, one may find that, in addition to fund raisings and field trips, there is much parent volunteerism in the form of (a) assistance to the instructional program (e.g., as tutors), (b) as "spotters" for the school around the neighborhood (e.g., warning of drug dealing), and even occasionally (c) as "caretakers" for the school (e.g., volunteering to paint and repair).

As we have observed above in the molding of parental expectations, principals also communicate to the community a "proper" parental role in the arena of parental involvement. Mr. Simpson, principal of the Fostoria School, for example, sought and encouraged parental participation but was very upset when a group of parents threatened to go "over his head" to a district-wide advisory council with a complaint about one of the school's teachers ("I don't like them washing our dirty linen in public like that"). Another principal, noticing that several parents escorted their youngsters to and from the building each day, asked them to "stay around" until all of the children had filed into the school, thereby increasing the responsibility of the parent-community for decorum and order on the school playground.

Such socialization initiatives can cut both ways, of course. Principal Leonardi used a battery-operated bullhorn each day to herd pupils into and out of the Melmont School every morning and afternoon and to supervise pupil behavior at lunch and recess. Leonardi, a very mild-mannered and soft-spoken individual, hated the use of the bullhorn but had been made very much aware that the instrument (a voice of authority that had been employed by Leonardi's much-liked predecessor) was expected by the surrounding neighborhood.

The orchestration of parental involvement can be a critical activity fraught with the danger of "too much" involvement and the possibility of parental "input" that becomes disruptive. Principal Daniel Evans, newly assigned to the Tucker School, explains for example that he has to tread very carefully. A few key parents, in control of the school's PTA, and in league with a number of the teachers in the school were successful in forcing the former principal out. Similarly, as the following example demonstrates, Martha Brazelton, principal of Eisenhower High School finds herself embroiled in a "take over" effort by a militant community group and works to deflect the pressure that has been generated into acceptable channels of behavior: Eisenhower High School has recently suffered an auditorium fire, causing much damage but no injuries. The fire appears to have been set by some arsonists over the past weekend. The school's parent council is much concerned, has distributed a flyer in the community asking for help in identifying the culprit(s), and is now meeting at the school to discuss the matter. There is concern about whether the auditorium can be repaired in time for graduation, and there is a motion to be considered--a parents' council reward for the capture of the fire bug.

The turnout for this morning's meeting is fairly large. The president, Mrs. Conroy, opens the meeting by reporting to the parents she has been assured that the auditorium can be repaired in time for graduation and she is very glad to hear this because there was fear they would have to raise funds to rent a hall. Mrs. Conroy goes on to suggest that the school and the parent council each contribute a hundred dollars in reward money for information leading to the arrest of the arsonist.

At this point a number of people begin to speak up. The discussion now begins to be directed not at Mrs. Conroy but at Mrs. Brazelton, the school's principal. One person asks how they can be so sure someone from the community set the fire and that the community has knowledge of it. The school has been undergoing some rehabilitation lately; it might not be someone from the community, perhaps somebody involved on the contractor's end is to blame.

A second, a third, and a fourth person speak. The flyer that went out said that we must "seek out the person among us who set the fire." This assumes that the guilty party is from the community. It is inappropriate, someone says, for the flyer to blame the community for the fire. Others add: "Do you have copies of the reports from the police and fire departments? What do they say? We need the facts not assumptions." Why would a community person just set the fire and not steal anything? It must be someone with a different motive--maybe a worker involved in the rehab who has a complaint against his employer, or somebody else who is angry at the Board of Education.

At this point Mrs. Conroy asks for a vote on the reward money, but this simply aggravates the issue, no vote is taken, and tempers begin to flare. The most outspoken critics are not parent council regulars, and one of the regulars asks some of the newcomers if they are from the community. Addresses are given to show they are, but there is a hostile atmosphere now.

At a question as to why the night watchman did not guard the auditorium properly, and why the alarm system did not work, Principal Brazelton takes the opportunity to redirect the discussion to the school's security problems in general. There is constant theft from lockers, there is insufficient security staff to cover the many halls and exits, there have been recent cuts in security aide resources. The discussion does shift, and many questions are now asked about the school's security.

Soon, one person suggests that the community can get help only if they go to the Board of Education offices as a group and demonstrate in favor of more security for the school. Brazelton quickly intervenes and suggests that at the next meeting they ask Mr. Forman (who is in charge of security for the school system) to come and talk with the council to answer their questions. Mrs. Conroy jumps in to say that the parents, for one thing, must start helping with security. Another regular council member adds: "The parents can come to this school to volunteer, that's a great idea; we've got to take a first step here, pledge ourselves to assisting security, not just discuss this as something somebody should be doing." An additional council regular continues pointedly: "We sit and talk but who shows up to do the work? There's a big difference in saying at a meeting that you want to be involved in something and actually showing up for work to be done. You've got to get up, put your clothes on, and get yourself going." There's no response from the previously vocal newcomers, and the principal offers, as the meeting closes, to walk over to the auditorium with any who wishes to take a look at the damage that was done.

## 5. Summary

A key activity of the principalship is the "socialization" of the parent clientele. Although parent participation is becoming increasingly accepted and valued in urban education, the principal finds that a managerial responsibility beyond the encouragement of parental involvement is (a) the molding of parental expectation vis-a-vis the work of the school, (b) helping both parents and pupils with a variety of "welfare" problems unrelated to schooling, and (c) guiding and channeling parent involvement in acceptable styles and directions of behavior.

## Footnotes

[1] Blau, P. *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

[2] Skolnick, J. *Justice Without Trial* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1960).

[3] Prottas, J.M. *People-Processing* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Book, 1979).

[4] Katz, E. and Eisenstadt, S.N. "The Response of Israeli Organizations to New Immigrants," in *Bureaucracy and the Public*, E. Katz and B. Danet, eds. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973, pp. 73-87).

[5] Crowson, R.L. and Porter-Gehrie, C. "The Discretionary Behavior of Principals in Large-City Schools," *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Winter 1980): 45-69.

## VI-B. CRAZY MOTHER AS MASCOT:

### A Case Study in Disarming the Volatile Critic

### 1. Introduction

A principal's encounters with parents are usually brief and focused on a clear purpose. Parents may ask the principal's assistance on procedural matters such as registering their children for school. Parents may meet the principal at a meeting called to decide whether special education services are appropriate for a child. Parents frequently initiate meetings with the principal when they want to discuss problems with their child's schedule. Parents who come to pick up ill or injured children at the school will frequently be introduced to the principal.

When a student chronically misbehaves, it is usual that the parents will confer with the principal several times. These parent conferences are designed to impress upon the child the seriousness of school disruptions and the need to behave better in the future. A string of disciplinary conferences involving parents, the student and the principal is initiated by the school in order to seek solutions to behavioral disorders. The fact that parents are called to the school for a disciplinary conference may, in itself, be a punishment for some children.

But in addition to those parents who visit the school for either procedural or disciplinary reasons, there are always a few who repeatedly enter the school in order to participate in the school's program. These participants ostensibly come to lend a hand. They volunteer to tutor students or to assist a teacher. Frequently they participate in enrichment programs that give special trips, materials or entertainments for children. Parents sometimes participate in fund raiding projects such as donut sales or carnivals.

Among these helpers there occasionally emerges a regular volunteer whose self-appointed role goes beyond augmenting the staff. These parents seek to participate in the administration of the school. This usually means that they want to have a say in the evaluation of teachers and programs. We have come to refer to such a parent as Crazy Mother.

What is crazy about Crazy Mother? She approaches the school with an over-riding need to explore and improve her children's instruction. She is not interested in schedules, union contracts, central office bulletins or other constraints of organizational life. Her suggestions, therefore, seem crazy, because they fly in the face of what is possible organizationally and what is consistent with the school's established practices.

And yet, crazy mother is more than just a complainer or trouble maker.

Her position as volunteer makes her more knowledgeable about the teachers, programs and students in the school than most parents. Her concern for children is respected. She is more of a member of the school's staff than most outsiders. Her presence, enduring interest and generally good motives give her a position somewhat like a mascot. She is not a member of the team, but she has won herself a place with the team that is firmly affiliated with its spirit and sense of purpose. Though usually female, the existence of crazy father is certainly possible. It is typically, however, the mother who has the leisure time to devote many hours of service to the school during the day when classes are in session.

## 2. Prototype

The John Dewey Elementary School was unusually large. Most of its 1400 students were black. While 700 students were from low income houses and qualify for a free lunch program, the remaining students came from middle class families. For many years the middle class parents pressured the school's administration to establish stiff academic standards for teachers and students. In the past they organized community demonstrations and protests when they felt that teachers were poorly prepared and incompetent. The active involvement of parents in school life led to so much conflict between parents and teachers that a former principal was driven from the school.

The current principal, Mrs. Owens, was a black female who lived in the neighborhood. She was offered the job repeatedly before she agreed to accept it. Capitalizing on her popularity when selected, her first priority was to restore the principal's authority. As a first step she established ground rules for parents' participation in academic programs. At a meeting of parents and faculty where the rules were announced she told them that "either I run the school or you can get somebody else."

She understood that many teachers felt attacked by the parents' constant surveillance and criticism. The rules helped. Once having gained control of parents' access to teachers, she also became the mediator of conflict that developed between parents and teachers. Although she allowed parents to observe classes, they were not permitted to speak with a teacher while the teacher conducted class. When a parent had a complaint about a teacher, the parent was to meet with Owens and allow Owens to work with the teacher to improve the situation. In order to keep the school out of family disputes, particularly over the custody of children, Owens refused to meet with any relative who was not a child's legal guardian to discuss the child's placement, achievement or other school matter.

Over the years, the parents came to trust Owens. They generally felt that she struggled to keep academic standards high. The student body did score above the city average in reading, although they tested below the national norm. There were many students, however, whose math and reading scores were far above the national norm. Owens developed an array of advanced and enrichment courses in art, film making, foreign language and black history. Original plays and musicals performed by the students in school were also presented at community meetings and religious services. The special programs were structured so that all students at least got a "taste" of them for one period each week. More intensive exposure was provided for the older, brightest students.

Since Owens became principal seven years ago, she has fired three tenured teachers. The process of dismissing a teacher is extremely complex and time consuming. Observation in the classroom, documentation of teaching inadequacies, conferences with the teacher, visits by district office staff, and follow-up reports on the teacher's repeated failures to improve take months to complete and can fill file drawers. Owens believed that removing these poor teachers had an impact on the school that justified the effort. Both parents and teachers saw her as effective, her own authority in the school was strengthened by her demonstrating the grave consequence of poor teaching performance.

Owens maintained communication with parents in three ways. She attended monthly PTA meetings where parents asked questions about the school. She sent a newsletter to parents each month; an important tool, the newsletter contained information about schedule changes, school routines, fund raising events, staff changes and volunteer posts. She encouraged parents to communicate freely with her by phone and face to face in the neighborhood as well as the school building.

Many parents volunteered to assist teachers in classrooms and learning laboratories. They organized a book distribution program; and they raised money for cultural events. Owens set aside a social room where parent volunteers could meet, eat lunch and visit. In addition to being a courteous gesture, the room directed parents away from the faculty lounge where teachers wanted to relax and speak informally about the day's events.

When parents work in a school, they are apt to witness events that stray from the standard rules and procedures outlined by the Board of Education. After one such occasion, Owens informed a teacher that a parent had complained that she smoked in the classroom when the children were at the gym or recess. Owens said that the parent had also informed the District Superintendent and he had said that the smoking must stop. The teacher and Owens exchanged a knowing look as Owens indicated that "you know who" had turned the teacher into the district office. A smoker herself, Owens saw nothing wrong with the teacher smoking, as long as the children were not present. Still they had to follow the rules to the letter--especially since "you know who" would probably be watching.

Mrs. Washington, a mother of two outstanding students, had volunteered at Dewey school for two and one-half years. When her family moved to the neighborhood, she felt at first that the school was unresponsive to her requests and inquiries about her children's program. When she told Owens that she felt that teachers "wouldn't listen", Owens encouraged her to get involved in some of the volunteer efforts in the school and to "come see me whenever you have a question." Over the years Washington has visited Owens many times to ask questions and offer opinions about how the school should be run.

A recent issue concerned the problem of entering the school after the class bell had rung. While in the building the previous day, Mrs. Washington had argued with a teacher's aide over the matter of admitting children who returned late from lunch. To resolve this encounter, Owens asked the aide and Washington to meet with her. Washington requested that the meeting be held in the early morning so that her husband could attend, as well.

At 9:05 AM the Washingtons arrived for their meeting with Owens and Mrs. North, the aide. Mr. Washington, an attorney, appeared well dressed, relaxed and handsome as he chatted with Owens about community events. His wife was somewhat prissy in her crisply tailored suit with her hair drawn neatly into a bun. She did not join in the friendly conversation, but tapped her fashionable high heels as they waited for the aide to arrive.

After a few minutes there was a knock at the door and Owens invited the aide, Mrs. North, an older black woman, into the principal's office. Mrs. North was overweight and had a rumpled, worn appearance. She shuffled as she walked to the far side of the office and slowly lowered herself into the empty chair. She smiled nervously as Owens asked her to explain, from her point of view, what had happened the previous day.

Mrs. North said that yesterday she was showing several children how to open the outside doors. She said that there were children who had arrived late, and she was showing them how to open the door. She said that the children often come to the door and do not know how to open it. Then, according to Mrs. North, Mrs. Washington began to interfere by opening the door for the children herself and letting the ones that were outside come in. Mrs. North told her not to open the door for the children, and this led to a disagreement between the two women.

Mrs. Washington then gave her side. She said that she heard children outside and went to let them in. Mrs. North stopped her by telling her "Do not open the door, the children know how to open the door." She said that Mrs. North did not explain that she was giving the children a lesson on the use of the door. Furthermore, on several occasions, Mrs. Washington claimed to have seen children locked out at this exit. She regretted that there had been a disagreement. The "real issue" she explained, is the door. The lock is temperamental, it is not always open when it should be and it is hard to open even when the door is unlocked.

Owens admitted that "I know that it is a difficult lock." She promised to check the lock immediately. She added, however, that she was troubled that Mrs. Washington was upset and that there had been an argument between her and Mrs. North. Mrs. Washington said, "It is upsetting not to be able to bring my child into the building when it is supposed to be open." She added that the school clocks are often off from the correct time by several minutes, which contributes to children returning late from lunch. Then Mrs. Washington asked, "Why can't Mrs. North be there to let us in?" She believed that Mrs. North should be at the door, admitting the children instead of teaching the children to let themselves in. "I have frequently stood out there and banged on the door," she explained.

Owens turned to Mrs. North and indicated that "she can't be everywhere." She said that she has instructed Mrs. North to open the door from the inside if she hears someone knocking. However, Mrs. North has an assignment in a classroom after the class bell, and she is not supposed to be in the hall once the bell has rung. Mrs. North admitted, however, that sometimes she is not at the door before the class bell because she has been delayed at her previous assignment. Owens instructed Mrs. North to let people in until the class bell rang. She also promised to fix the lock. Then she asked Mr. Washington whether he had any suggestions.

He suggested that the children be called from the playground and brought into the building just before the class bell. He said that in the past the assistant principal used to call the children in from the playground every day, but recently no one has done it. This had left many children still playing on the playground after the class bell rang.

Owens fully agreed. She told him that, "in fact the same issue was raised at last night's PTA meeting." She scheduled a meeting with the security guards this morning and will instruct them to call the children in from the playground. Also, bulletins would be issued to teachers instructing them to remind children of playground procedures. Mrs. Washington agreed with the need to do this. She said, "Children don't think very far ahead. Some children will just stand there and cry if they see that the door is locked. They won't know or think of how else to enter the building." Owens agreed, saying that teachers should remind students which exits are open after the class bell. She then asked whether there were any more issues. The Washingtons said there were none, so Owens sent Mrs. North to her assignment.

Once Mrs. North had left, Mrs. Washington had a great deal to say: "Mrs. Owens, this has been going on all year, it is extremely irritating, and it forces me to come to the school and put my child into that door." Owens promised to take immediate action on the lock. Mrs. Washington then concluded with the comment, "I don't think Mrs. North understands the problem....she just refused to listen! She didn't tell me that she was teaching the children to open the lock."

At this point, Mr. Washington pointed to the researcher and asked for some identification. Although the researcher had been introduced to the Washingtons when they arrived, he wanted to know more explicitly who the researcher represented. When he learned that it was the University of Illinois, not the Board of Education, he relaxed a bit. Then he explained that, "In that case, I have something to say, Mrs. Owens, and it may sound very serious and negative but I think I need to say it." Mrs. Owens asked him to go ahead.

Mr. Washington then proceeded as follows: "This whole thing is not a physical problem with the lock. It has to do with something else.. someone should be there at that door, supervising that entrance as the kids come in. She (Mrs. North) or someone should be there in *fact*. For the first three weeks of the school year, I made a habit of walking my children to school myself. Things worked out very well with Mrs. North. The assistant principal also was often there to help get the kids into the building. Then, after about three weeks, I decided to send the children by themselves. But after I stopped going and helping Mrs. North and the assistant principal, I discovered that the assistant principal stopped helping. Then Mrs. North didn't show up. Now, the children stayed on the playground, and when the class bell rang, there was no one to bring them in. Furthermore, because there was no one letting the children in the door, the children would bunch around the door and cause a disturbance. Sometimes a group of children at the door kept other children out in the cold weather. Several times, I have brought my own children to the school and found this situation. I have beat on the door until my knuckles are red, waiting for someone to open the door from the inside to let us in. I've seen children on the playground a full ten minutes after the class bell... and nobody there to let them in. You know, Mrs. Owens, children around here are treated as non-people. Something has got to be done about this situation."

Owens thanked him for bringing this situation to her attention. She promised "to definitely work on this." After the Washingtons left, she immediately asked the school engineer to her office. She explained that the door must be repaired so that it could be opened easily. "I want that done immediately, if not sooner," she told him. He replied that he would call the carpenter "right now."

Then Owens turned to the researcher and remarked, "You were asked what you were doing here, weren't you? Before Mr. W would say anything negative, he wanted to know who you were. You see... he was going to protect me, just in case there was a problem." And then she seemed amused. "You know," she said, "I was surprised to see Mrs. Washington in her high heels and blue eye shadow. Ordinarily she doesn't wear make up."

### 3. Comment

The preceding anecdotes tell a story about how a principal handles parents who take an overactive interest in the affairs of the school. The smoking incident depicts an unexpected finding about the impact of parental criticism on school personnel. Such criticism can heighten positive bonds between teachers and the principal. The parent's critical eye became a shared burden among the staff. Although Owens indicated that the teacher should go along with the no-smoking rule, she urged this not because it was a good rule, but merely to smooth over potential conflict with a parent. The "you know whos", the crazy mothers, who continually complain about school personnel and procedures contribute to a group feeling and sense of belonging among the staff and administrators.

The incident involving the Washingtons illustrates some strategies that this principal used when responding to parents. An important first task was to reduce the interpersonal conflict between Mrs. Washington and Mrs. North so that the issue could be released from the grips of their bad feelings. It would appear that Mrs. Washington had felt for some time that Mrs. North was letting down on the job. She had not been covering ground the way she should, making sure that she had time to watch the exit as she moved from one classroom assignment to another. Seeing children trying to get into the door, Mrs. Washington had stepped in, burdening herself with the role of bringing children inside the building. She was outraged when Mrs. North told her not to open the door for the children. If Mrs. North was not going to let the children in herself, she certainly should not have interfered with Mrs. Washington's doing so. If Mrs. North was too slow and lazy to stand her post, she should not have rebuffed Mrs. Washington's industry and assistance.

Interestingly, Owens reduced the interpersonal conflict by having Mrs. North and Mrs. Washington confront one another in her office. Although Mrs. Washington was surprised and skeptical of Mrs. North's explanation that she was teaching the children to open the door for themselves, she accepted the explanation. Mrs. Washington responded by redefining the problem as the faulty lock. Owens picked up the less personal definition of the problem, promising to fix the lock immediately.

Then Owens began to work on repairing the relationship between the two women. She made it clear that Mrs. North "can't be everywhere," and that she had given Mrs. North instructions to be at her classroom assignment on time. Mr. Washington suggested that the problem was one of playground supervision and the assignment of staff. He then went farther, claiming that the problem was not "a physical problem with the lock." As a parent, he wanted someone at the exit to bring children in from the playground and open the door to permit an orderly entrance into the building. The humiliation of standing in the snow, trying to gain entry and "beating on that door until my knuckles are red," had to stop. Insensitivity to the frustration of trying to get into the building amounted to treating children (and parents for that matter) as "non-people." The message was clear. Somebody had better start to care about managing that exit more fully, or there would be trouble.

Aside from offering some support for Mrs. North, Owens in no way defended the situation at the exit. She did not offer any of the possible, reasonable explanations as to why it was difficult to cover all exits or adequately supervise the playgrounds. Instead, she promised to "definitely work on this." She thereby kept a free hand in determining how to allocate her staff. Solving the situation was her problem, and by accepting the responsibility for it she left her authority intact. Her plan was to get the lock fixed so that children could let themselves in when they arrived late, and to assign the security guard to the troublesome exit. In this way she felt she could get results.

It is interesting to note the effort that Mrs. Washington went to with her appearance for the meeting. By dressing up she emphasized her social status. This, and the fact that she brought her husband along, made the point that the problem was important and her concern should be taken seriously. Yet, the Washingtons did not really want to make trouble for Owens. This is implied by their reluctance to reveal serious and negative information in the presence of a possible representative of the Board of Education. The Washingtons were interested and involved parents. They wanted to have an effect on their children's school, but they did not want to be destructive. Their protective attitude toward Owens signals their general good will.

## VI-C. HOLDING THE CUSTOMERS:
## Headhunting in Scholastica

### 1. Introduction

One of the imperatives of managerial behavior is the protection of resource allocations. Unit administrators, no matter what the organizational context, typically strive to "hold the line" on staffing levels, budgetary allotments, and overall resource capabilities. Very often a manager's standing among both subordinates and peers, the manager's right to demand the allegiance of employees, and a manager's capacity for creating a climate of good morale and high productivity depend considerably upon both the image and evidence of resource stability that he or she is able to communicate. Organizational units that are losing budgetary resources typically suffer a decline in purposefulness, security, and confidence that goes far beyond the mere loss of operating funds.

A commonly used criterion for resource allocation in education is student enrollment. Levels of staffing (both professional and non-professional), distributions of instructional materials and office supplies, allocations of furniture and equipment, and even the salary categorizations of some key administrators (e.g., building principals)--are frequently keyed to indicators of the number of pupils attending school. It is to each building principal's decided advantage to maintain his level of student enrollment, for an enrollment loss is very quickly translated into redistributions of valued instructional resources.[1]

One of the key tasks of the building principal, accordingly, is the monitoring, protection, and stimulation of his school's student headcount and daily attendance. It is an area of principaling that involves frequent and often sensitive interaction with the community, involves an occasionally competitive give-and-take with other building-level administrators, and involves some elements of conflict with hierarchical superiors. Three areas of activity in which the principal's efforts to "hold the customers" have been most observable are: First, attempts to increase the attractiveness of the school program; second, decisions to "bend" Board of Education rules and procedures; and third, efforts to retain, court, and counsel individual school clients.

### 2. Modes of Enrollment Control (Holding the Customers)

a. Mode One: Increasing the Attractiveness of the School--School district enrollment policies provide clear-cut attendance boundaries and pupil identification and specify enrollment procedures for each of the city's schools. Nevertheless, principals (both elementary and high school) have discovered that programmatic and curricular alterations can affect the clientele appeal of their building. A first strategy is to differentiate or expand the school's program in some attractive fashion. The idea is to reorient or revise the curriculum in a manner that better holds the interest of pupils enrolled in the school, promotes better pupil attendance, and guards against dropouts. Mr. Walters, for example, principal of the Westmont High School, met repeatedly throughout the school year with the school's faculty members in a number of academic departments (e.g., science, history, foreign languages). Walters pointed out that the school was in severe difficulty in pupil attendance and enrollment, and some curriculum changes, to modernize the school's offerings, had to be made. "We may have to cut physics, for instance, and add environmental science. It's in."

Later, after a meeting with his faculty, Walters said he's got to get his faculty to see that they have to re-shape the traditional curriculum of the school. "Their jobs are at stake."

A variant of the program development strategy is an effort to "reach out" with curricula that increase the attractiveness of one's building to the school-entering clientele. The idea, as one principal expressed it, is to develop "a hook to get kids into this school." Mrs. Jennings, for instance, worked carefully with her faculty in the Wilson High School to inaugurate "early involvement classes" for academically gifted seventh and eighth grade pupils in a number of nearby junior high schools. The younger students would travel to the high school for part of each day to take advanced classes in selected subject areas (e.g., math, science). In an elementary school setting, Principal Farnsley, newly appointed to the Larson School, devoted considerable attention in his first year to the school's kindergarten program, indicating that he was working with the teachers to move the kindergarten curriculum toward a more rigorously structured learning experience, away from a loosely organized socialization-into-school experience. Farnsley explained that he had become aware that in the heavily Catholic neighborhood surrounding his school nearly every five-year-old attended the public school kindergarten (no parochial school program was offered in the area) but that only about half the area youngsters continued into first grade in the public school. By re-shaping and emphasizing the academic side of the kindergarten year, Farnsley hoped to increase the appeal of the public school to area families.

Additional strategies for increasing the attractiveness of the school program commonly involve efforts to affect (a) the pupil reward system and/or (b) the image of the school. The school district under study kept a record of, and partially evaluated principal performance in terms of, monthly reports of student attendance. Consequently principals would often seek means for rewarding pupils (e.g., special popular film showings) for excellent attendance. In considering the image of the school, principals were observed to be well attuned to events and opportunities that offered a communication of their school's "message." Principal Leavitt, for example, was very upset when he learned that only two pupils from the Greenbriar High School would be participating in the city-wide science fair this year. The science fair, like excellence in high school sports, engenders media attention to individual schools.

b. Mode Two: Bending the Rules--There are clear-cut procedural guidelines governing the allocation of students to schools and the documentation (e.g., inoculation records, evidence of age and residence) that must accompany the admissions decision. Under the press of enrollment and resource need, however, principals are very often open, flexible, and responsive in special situations--they bend the rules for student admissions, they take liberties with enrollment reporting, and they are liberal in interpreting district instructions on attendance rosters.[2]

When there is space available, and particularly when there is some prior tie to the school (e.g., younger siblings attended), principals will grant themselves a free-wheeling interpretation of attendance-area boundaries. Elementary principal Foster, in illustration, indicates that this approach gives her a rather good "hold" upon some of her pupils. Foster admits: "...in general I'm not picky about where the students in the school live." However, she adds that if a youngster begins to present a behavioral problem, she always checks the home address and if it is outside the school's attendance boundary she'll insist upon a transfer.

Similarly, Principal Martinson comments, after a parent conference, that he's fully aware that the father actually lives in a nearby suburb and drives his children to and from the Froebel School each day. Martinson says he is perfectly willing to "look in the other direction," since the children are extremely bright. High school principal Greer smilingly comments, after an incident in the hall, that many students are very reluctant to give their home addresses, for fear they will be forced to transfer to their "rightful" school. Greer says he always has to reassure them that he doesn't really care where they live.

On an individual, case-by-case basis, principals are as willing to overlook many prohibitions governing school admissions documentation as they are flexible about school attendance boundaries. Some of the restrictions such as a proper inoculation record or a birth certificate are occasionally waived or at least given a long extension for compliance.[3] Occasionally, the procedures and paper work necessary to a special enrollment situation are simply bypassed. Principal Bachman, for example, tells his secretary to just go ahead and enroll a number of students (without proper records and papers) whom he is convinced are illegal immigrants. Bachman does mention that district policy requires him to direct the issue and the individuals to the central office if there is a probable question of illegality but this would probably create much more of a "hassle" than he cares to deal with, so why not just admit them.

The illegal immigrant example, above, also typifies an opportunity for information control that becomes useful to principals in bending rules on enrollment in their own favor. Higher regions of the bureaucracy depend upon enrollment and attendance data supplied by principals, in building their resource allocation plans. The principal will consequently give careful thought to his communications with "downtown." Geraldine Marks, for example, principal of the Neeley School, mentions one day that final enrollment figures for the fall are due tomorrow. Marks says she's going to gamble a bit and over-report her actual enrollment because new kids are still coming in every day and she is sure her enrollment will easily reach her reported figure. Otherwise, there might be a move to cut a position somewhere. Once they cut a position, it is a long struggle to get it back, even if enrollment goes way up.

In a somewhat similar situation, but with a reversal of information origin, Principal Orestes Martin remarks bemusedly that headquarters figures for the enrollment in his bilingual classes are badly inflated. He is not going to say anything, though, because corrected data would probably cost him a cut in staff. And, in another example of information error, elementary principal John Bowker tells his assistant principal to "sit" for awhile on the files of eight newly entering kindergarten pupils. The parents of the eight pupils brought their youngsters to the wrong school, incorrectly thinking Bowker's school served their portion of the neighborhood rather than the "next school over." Bowker tells the assistant to wait for awhile, to see if their own attendance area produces enough kindergarten children to fill the two classes, before deciding whether to direct the parents to the proper school.

c. Mode Three: Retaining, Courting, Counseling Individual Clients-- Principals spend a considerable amount of their own time talking with pupils and parents about enrollment concerns. At the elementary level, parents will frequently "shop" for a school with a reputation for either quality or disciplinary control. Or, alternatively, parents will seek to send their children to a school that is familiar. The family has moved but older siblings all attended the Elmwood School, and the family would like the younger ones to go there also.

As indicated earlier, principals will show much leniency in enforcing attendance boundaries. Generally, however, there is considerable selectivity on the part of the principal in filling available classroom space from out-of-district applicants. A lengthy conference with parents stresses the favor that is being done and communicates standards of behavior and achievement that are to be met. Principals are more likely to admit youngsters whose parents are able to communicate, during the conference, a seriousness of purpose.

Selectivity and a "building" of the student body are also a key to the personal attention given to student enrollment matters by high school principals. In a telephone conversation with Mr. Samuel Tayton, Principal of Hannaway High School, for example, Mrs. Williams threatened to withdraw her daughter and send her to another school elsewhere in the city. Tayton urged the family not to take that action, pointing out that the daughter was the top student in the junior class, a leader in the school, and important to the school program. Alternatively, Principal L. S. Hampton responded to a counselor who had informed him that a particular student was in that morning asking for a transfer: "Let him go, that guy's been nothing but trouble for us." Just a few minutes earlier, Hampton had finished a conversation in his office with another pupil--urging the student to wait until summer before transferring, finishing the year out and seeing "how things go."

Principal James Arneson, similarly, agreed to see a parent and a prospective student who had arrived without appointment early in the school year asking for a transfer into Coolidge High School. Arneson explored the stated reason for transfer with the family, then went to the outer office to call the former school to check on the student's school record, discovering that the pupil had had a problem of chronic truancy from school. Whereupon Arneson returned to his office and "cooled out" the transfer request, saying, no he won't consider a transfer at this time and that the student should wait till the beginning of next semester, at the earliest.

Many additional consultations with pupils and parents (among both elementary and high school principals) centered upon the implementation of a voluntary pupil transfer approach to school desegregation. While principals throughout our study sample attempted conscientiously and with commitment to carry out the intent of the desegregation initiative, it was widely recognized by principals that they, as "middle managers," were in a conflict situation. Board of Education policy in encouraging the transfer of pupils into desegregated facilities with space available was at variance with Board of Education policy that awarded school building-by-building resources on the basis of pupil retention.

Most principals sought to encourage the transfer of their pupils to the special schools and facilities that formed the crux of the desegregation effort (e.g., classical schools, magnet schools, career development centers) in such a manner as to hold intact their present levels of staffing and other resources. While a number of pupils were encouraged and assisted in transferring, a large outflow of students, endangering pupil-teacher ratios, was a cause for concern. Occasionally principals would caution their colleagues on established norms of polite behavior in "raiding" one another's schools, as when one principal "kiddingly" remarked "Oh, you want to drain me of my white kids," in response to the sales pitch of another principal concerning a new program. Occasionally, as well, principals would hold conferences with interested parents and find that a full disclosure of information about an innovative program might raise more doubts than it satisfied, as when Mrs. E. decided not to enroll her daughter in a new program when she discovered it meant all day in another school, with busing back and forth.

### 3. Summary

The distribution of school unit-level resources is keyed to student enrollment. Not only the staffing and equipment/material resources are of consideration to the principal in this distribution but also the aura of competency and control that the principal is able to project. Principals who manage to hold steady or increase the flow of resources to their respective schools have much greater stature and authority than those who do not.

Although Board of Education policy is fairly explicit on pupil enrollment procedures, and the results are closely monitored, we find that building principals have wide-ranging discretionary opportunities for affecting their enrollment levels and student body mix. There is sufficient flexibility in student transfer and attendance procedure to warrant spending time to increase the appeal of one's school to selected groups of clientele. There is room within the set of rules surrounding student enrollment for a breadth of interpretation of special cases and situations and, most importantly, for a management of the flow of enrollment/attendance information that goes forward from the school building to the headquarters hierarchy. And, there is much opportunity, because the principal is the key management official in touch with pupils and parents, for a counseling of and assistance to individual clients in such a manner as to insure school resource maintenance.

## Footnotes

[1] As we have noted elsewhere, the site-level administrator (the building principal) may gain or lose control over the immediate work environment as pupil enrollments and consequently resource levels ebb and flow. During good times administrators have a greater call upon special favors and "chips" for use in bargaining for cooperation of lower-level workers and clients. (See R. Crowson and C. Porter-Genrie, "The Discretionary Behavior of Principals in Large-City Schools," Educational Administration Quarterly, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter 1980): 45-69.)

[2] In much of this program development and rule bending activity, there is a widespread sense of competitive stress. As one principal put it, "Other, nearby schools are working hard to attract pupils from our area, from our clientele; we've got to get busy too." Much of this competition between schools may have been more a result of recent policy initiatives on the part of the school district, to open up pupil and parent voluntarism in school choice (for desegregation purposes) than it was a resultant of declining enrollment (a smaller pupil pool) throughout the city. Whatever the cause, the consequence was a decided battle for enrollment "turf" among the city's schools and principals.

[3] The school district under study later (1980) enforced rigorously the state law that requires a proper immunization record. All school records (pupil health folders) are being examined in every city school by a central office team and proper documentation is now being enforced.

## VI-D. IMAGE BUILDING:
## Making Non-Educational Factors Work For You

### 1. Introduction

Building a school's image is of prime importance to principals. Much of their energy is devoted to this task and much of their behavior can be interpreted in relation to image building efforts. In this segment, the findings of our research will illustrate how principals are able to control certain variables within the school environment in order to create their notion of what the school image should be. More specifically, the purpose is to examine selected discretionary decisions of principals and to analyze them in terms of their effect on image building.

There is no agreement among principals as to what the "proper" school image should be. But there is consensus that only two groups of people matter to the principal so far as school image is concerned: (a) the external clients, the parents or the community at large, and (b) the internal professional cadre, the school bureaucracy, including the district and central office administrators. Our research reveals numerous illustrations of the principal in the process of conscious image building with these two constituencies. For ease of analysis, we will deal with external and internal image building separately although, in practice, they may not be easily separated.

### 2. Building the External Image of the School

The principal is responsible for how the school looks to the public. How does he help the school achieve visibility to enhance its status in the community? Let us begin with an illustration of a school in which external image building is relatively easy. This particular elementary school has a unique curriculum for children interested in the fine arts. It is a special "academy," known as the Miller Fine Arts Academy, and is a part of the "Access to Excellence" program of the Chicago Public Schools. Even though the school has a fine educational program contributing to its community image, it is the non-educational factors which have brought wide acclaim and increased community support to the school. The principal is a master at gaining visibility for the school. He knows how to make his institution look good to the public.

Miller Academy was converted from a regular elementary school to a "magnet" school as a part of the city-wide Access to Excellence Program. It was a school of decreasing enrollment in a rapidly changing neighborhood. But there was an active, integrated community group led by some determined young parents who were struggling to keep the school open. They were convinced that with the proper leadership and a committed faculty, this school could become a model for the entire city. The principal, Mr. Silas Herbert, was brought in to convert the school to an academy when it reopened with a city-wide attendance area.

Herbert's first act was to meet with the community people who had urged conversion of the school to an academy. He was convinced that the image of the school could not be maintained solely on its "academy" status. He recognized the political vulnerability of the Access to Excellence Program and the program's ties to the city's controversial desegregation policy. For this reason, he began immediately to build a political foundation for the school within the neighborhood. He met with the group of liberal lawyers and other community people who had been the prime movers in the conversion of the school. He allied himself with the community leader who was soon to become the president of the school parent council. Along with this association came access to the local press and visibility within the community.

Because Herbert had demonstrated his ability (through his contacts) to get a good press, he was continually approached by community people with ideas for the school. For example, several of the local community leaders felt that the school should sponsor an exchange program with a school in Italy. Through an international organization specializing in such exchanges, forty children from Italy came to Miller Academy for three weeks. Each child lived in the home of a Miller student and even the Italian teacher, counselor and administrators stayed in the neighborhood. The exchange at Miller Academy was widely covered in the press including the major Chicago newspapers. The principal was even pictured in a Chicago newspaper as he greeted the Italian children upon their arrival in Chicago.

Another example of the ability of Miller Academy to attract press coverage was the presence of reporters and photographers at most of the routine school functions. A call from the principal to the leading Chicago papers resulted in coverage of a Halloween party or a Miller Science Fair. This influence with the press was certainly the result not only of Herbert's persuasive abilities but also to the community support and aid of the influential citizens with whom he cooperated. There is no question that such success with the press is rare and that the situation is somewhat unique, but still it illustrates the extent to which a principal can go to enhance the status of the school.

A more typical example of external image building on the part of the principal is that of Mr. Barber, principal of Langford Elementary School. Langford School is on the near-west side of Chicago and has a predominantly black and Latino student population. Barber also serves as principal of the nearby federally-funded Marks Child-Parent Center for pre-school children. This center is designed to involve lower-income parents in the early phases of school. Langford School has no glamorous educational program and Marks Center, while addressing a critical community need, was undistinguished in its academic and parental involvement activities.

So what did Mr. Barber do to enhance the status of his two institutions? First, he recognized the determination on the part of parents in the community to see the school establish a model for discipline. The absence of good home models made this need very critical. Thus Barber did everything possible to let the parents see how the school took discipline seriously. During the lunch hour, for example, he conspicuously stood in the school-yard with a battery-operated bullhorn shouting orders to children at the top of his lungs. What was important about this exercise was not whether he had any effect on the children but whether he was heard by parents in near-by apartment buildings. Barber was so aware of the value of this form of image building that he pointed his bullhorn toward the apartment buildings rather than toward the children as he shouted!

Another resource available to Barber in his effort to build a positive image for Langford School and the Marks Child-Parent Center is parental involvement in decision making. Barber was continually seeking ways to promote parental participation. Parental involvement is available to all principals as a resource in image building, but our research shows that it is seldom used. Barber used it extensively. He was aware that a local hospital had a federally funded program in post-partum care and that a small portion of the money was ear-marked for a sex education program for children 12-14 years of age. After learning of this program, Barber invited its director to meet with him and his PTA president, Ms. Gosage. The PTA had expressed concern about the teenage pregnancy problem in the area for several months. Barber saw this program as an opportune way in which to respond to a critical community need.

Barber asked Ms. Gosage, to bring the issue of the sex education program to a meeting of the PTA. To achieve success as an image building activity, Barber felt that it was necessary to have parents involved directly in the sex education program. For this reason he asked the program director to develop a one-session program, in addition to the five classes for children, which would require parents to be present with their children. The hospital sex education program director felt that this was an excellent idea and was willing to devote her time to run this session herself. She also promised to bring to the session for parents a Latino doctor who would answer questions. The PTA president became very enthusiastic about the program and promised to call a special meeting of the PTA to discuss the matter.

It was clear that Barber had found a vehicle for improving the image of the school in the community. Seeking permission from the PTA to pursue the program guaranteed the necessary parent involvement and locked the PTA into a cooperative arrangement with the school.

The sex education program turned out to be a great success. Barber received much appreciation from parents and was commended by the PTA for bringing a good educational experience for children and parents into the community. By involving the parents in the program, Barber was able to establish the school as a Center for addressing real social problems. Although not all principals would accept this responsibility for the schools, Barber was committed to the idea philosophically and was able to implement a very successful activity demonstrating his (and the school's) willingness to work with community problems.

Our research revealed that parental involvement, particularly through the PTA, is not considered by all principals to be necessarily desirable. The PTA, and parental involvement generally, ranged in popularity as a tool for image building from one extreme to the other. Mr. Barber at Langford School and Mr. Herbert at the Miller Academy were among those principals most willing to work with parents to enhance the status of the school in the community. In contrast to those principals anxious to work with the parents were several who felt that the parent groups were either conspiring to have them removed from office or simply unreliable when it came to helping the school solve a problem. Very few principals, however, were willing to openly ignore their parent groups even if they found them useless. While visiting one elementary school, a researcher was taken to a PTA breakfast. During the entire hour-long meeting and social gathering the principal managed not to speak to a single parent. He spoke only to the teachers present at the meeting. When asked by the researcher why he behaved in such an insulting manner, he said, "I never talk to parents. There is something wrong with people who meddle so closely in school affairs. I don't trust most of them." This attitude is certainly unusual but it reveals the lack of communication and general distrust existing between local school administrators and the public in some communities. It should be noted that there is a history in Chicago of parent organizations campaigning against local principals in an effort to have them transferred. Thus the fear of some principals of getting too involved with parents is based in reality. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of principals do depend on close working relationships with parents to aid in school image building.

Our research provided examples of many other practices which enhanced the image of the school in the public's mind. Following are a few of these.

a. At one high school the principal has encouraged an elaborate "farm system" within feeder elementary schools for recruitment of athletes. The system is quite complex employing a network of "alumni" groups and athletic coaches to visit each elementary school. The "farm system" also cleverly involves the administrators and PTA's of the feeder elementary schools in the recruitment process. The overall result of this recruiting effort, as stated by the principal, is improved athletic teams and a greatly enhanced status for the high school in the community.

b. Another image building technique used by many high schools is the freshmen orientacion to familiarize eighth graders from feeder schools with the programs and activities they will experience the following year. This type of orientation program is aimed as much at the parents of the eighth graders as it is at creating favorable attitudes among the children themselves. The overall goal of such orientations for big-city high schools is to show the parents that the school cares about each and every child.

c. Several principals in our research sample were found to favor carefully organized "benefits" of one type or another as a means of image building. For example, the principal of one school personally organizes each year a Christmas Pageant for senior citizens in the neighborhood. This is a major musical production participated in by students and parents and coordinated by the Mayor's office. It usually attracts press coverage and draws positive attention to the school.

d. In recent years, the Chicago Public Schools have published the results of standardized reading test scores school by school. Principals recognize the image building potential inherent in this practice. There is no question that schools showing high levels of improvement in test scores look good to the public. There is evidence in our research data to indicate that some principals place considerable pressure on teachers to work hard in improving the scores. A quotation from a memorandum sent to teachers early in the academic year by one principal is illustrative of the seriousness with which the reading test scores are taken:

> "As you know, 200 new students transferred into our school this year. Therefore, our (school statistics) do not show the movement of last year's student body adequately because one-third of our students are new.
>
> We have received many children who are several years behind in their reading skills. Our work is cut out for us.
>
> It is extremely important that each child be taught the skills at his level. Do not wait until the end-of-level test is given to reteach unlearned skills.
>
> Daily intervention is necessary . . . . it is crucial that classroom intervention techniques be employed by teachers prior to end-of-level testing. Our children can succeed with your help."

Both the tone and the content of this memorandum from the principal indicate the importance of improvement of reading scores as an image builder for the schools.

## 3. Building the School Image Within the System

In the previous section, emphasis has been placed on the principal's e in creating the external, public image of the school. We now turn ur attention to the image of the school as perceived by those within the system such as district administrators, and the various offices and departments at the Board of Education. Our research findings suggest that principals often go to great extremes to enhance the image of their school within the bureaucracy. Strategies to achieve visibility within the system are often considerably different and usually unknown to the general public.

The principal of a school recognized as having a model reading program, with proven success in the annual publication of test results, was able to parlay this success and improve the image of this school still further. The principal simply capitalized on his, and the school's, good name to obtain certain favors from the district superintendent. Because of the fine reputation of the school, the district superintendent was made to "look good" and she was more than willing to entertain special requests from the successful principal. For instance, the district superintendent always brought important guests to the school. Often they were top level administrators from the central office. Thus the image of the school spread through the hierarchy. Even though this particular principal was not unusually ambitious, it is certain that his own career within the system was enhanced by the attention his school was receiving. Thus, we have here a case of the "image-rich" getting richer.

In order to better understand the effects of having a good image within the system, it is instructive to note the problems faced by a principal whose school did not enjoy a good image within the system. Ms. Enis was engaged in a conflict with the building engineer regarding some repair work. The engineer suggested that the matter be taken to the district level for adjudication. Because Ms. Enis was not on speaking terms with the district superintendent, it was necessary for her to do as the engineer wished in order to avoid an embarrassing situation. After the engineer left the office, Ms. Enis went into a tirade about the district superintendent. "I never talk to him: He does not like me; he is never supportive of what I try to do." It was clear from the comments about the district superintendent that he was ensuring that those above him would also have a negative image of Ms. Enis' school. In contrast to the previous example, no visitors were ever brought to the school, all communication was transacted in writing, and no services were ever offered, other than those required by the district office. The situation was difficult for the teachers as well as the principal.

One upwardly mobile principal tried very hard to establish a good image within the system by being an exemplary bureaucrat. He took pride in completing all forms correctly and in doing his reports and other paper work perfectly. He spent every evening doing this sort of homework and bragged about how he spent every weekend on school paper work. For his efforts, he was recognized within his district as the model of efficiency. He was pointed out by the district superintendent as "the man to see" if you need help on forms, etc.. This principal enjoyed the "psychological strokes" he was getting for being the best. It was not clear to the researcher, however, what concrete rewards he was getting as a result of this image.

Several principals in our study were anxious to demonstrate their political influence within the system. There seemed to be some status associated with having an image of being able to "get things done." In most cases, however, getting things done meant manipulating the bureaucracy. A good example is that of a principal whose image rests on the fact that she is able to get "anything she wants" for her school. She is successful in getting supplies and even extra help by calling upon an elaborate network of friends in the system. She pointed out to the researcher that even the most difficult problems can be handled through her network.

Then she proceeded to demonstrate her ability and the reason she and her school enjoy a good image within the bureaucracy. During the time she was being observed, a bilingual teacher resigned from her school. It is a well known fact that bilingual teachers, fluent in both English and Spanish, are hard to find. But this principal saw the problem as a minor one and with only a few phone calls was able to find at least three bilingual teachers willing to work at her school. When she told this news to the bilingual office at the Board of Education, the staff was very surprised. One of the associate directors told the principal that she had not seen an applicant fluent in both languages in weeks. Because of her long history of developing relationships and working with people in the system, this principal had acquired an excellent image for herself and had made her school a desirable place in which to teach.

### 4. Summary

In this chapter, the efforts by principals to build an image for their schools has been analyzed. It can be concluded, that principals have considerable discretionary decision making power to influence the image of their schools both publicly and within the school system. Examples were presented to show how principals use various factors to enhance the status of their schools.

# CHAPTER VII

# PRINCIPALING AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE HIERARCHY

# VII-A. CREATIVE INSUBORDINATION: Civilized Disobedience

## 1. Introduction

One of the articles of faith in American institutional life is the dogma of "the chain of command." Every organization, because it involves by definition a group of people collected together for a supposedly common purpose, must be glued together with some sort of apparatus designed to make all individuals move more or less in the same direction. The name we conventionally give to this apparatus is "the chain of command," a generic phrase meant to imply a linkage between individuals, i.e., the "chain," and a rank order to the individuals specifying who can tell whom what to do, i.e., the "command." It is conventional wisdom that organizations work because individuals voluntarily submit their actions to the discipline of this network. There prevails a common consent that the chain is what holds people together and that the command structure is legitimate and necessary.

In an educational bureaucracy, as in any bureaucracy, the need for the chain-of-command apparatus is directly proportional to the size of the undertaking; the more remote and impersonal the decision-making becomes, the more reliance must be put on organization-oriented, as against person-oriented, considerations in deciding what people should be doing. Hence, the larger the educational system becomes, the more it begins to simulate a military table of organization in which orders and instructions are handed down from a central headquarters, through various echelons of administrators, finally reaching the operating unit of the collectivity where the clients are served.

The need for the manager to be bound by the command chain is the conventional wisdom. What is not so commonly understood in organization theory is the companion, and somewhat contradictory, idea that the need to *ignore* the chain of command also increases in urgency as the bureaucracy becomes larger. Precisely because decision-making relies on impersonal, apparatus-related expectations in large organizations, the need to *disobey* orders, in order to dilute their dehumanizing effects, becomes more compatible with principles of good management. The wisdom of knowing where and how to disobey is central to discretionary decision-making among school principals.

Among sophisticated administrators, particularly those who are sensitive to the human needs of their surroundings, such disobedience to the chain of command has been developed into an art form. The skillful practitioner strives for subtlety and unobtrusiveness in such behavior, always working at low-profile posture. The object is to disobey in such a way that the disobedient behavior produces the maximum effect locally, i.e., within the school, but minimum impact on one's superiors. That is, disobedience must serve its basic purpose, for example the maintenance of good morale, but do so with the least flurry feathers among command-oriented executives above. If this ratio is allowed to be reversed, then the administrator is obviously in trouble.

It is important to remember that the form of disobedience here under examination does not grow out of mere personal pique. The principal may or may not be comfortable with some instruction from his or her district superintendent, but what makes disobedience a workable option is the perception of that instruction, if carried out, as inimical to the welfare of the school. If this assessment of the impact of an order reveals potentially significant damage to the organization, then the principal begins the review of how to disobey the order in the most artistic, i.e., least obtrusive, manner.

## 2. Modes of Insubordination

a. Mode One: The Ploy that Failed--In our observation of school principals we have identified several modes of disobedience, many of which are understandably mild and benign in their overall impact on the hierarchy. These forms are harmless perhaps because (a) the principal lacks standing with his immediate superiors and is timid about reaching too far, or (b) he or she is unwilling to take the punishment for being caught, and therefore exhibits only a half-hearted defiance, or (c) the issue is trivial and not worth the expenditure of credibility "chips" in administrative maneuvering.

In one instance, for example, a high school principal was ordered by his district superintendent to reduce his cadre of assistant principals from four to three as a cost cutting move, the reduction in force (RIF) to be accomplished within thirty days. Of the four APs, two were well matched for their jobs and their removal would have been excessively disruptive. The other two therefore became the targets of the Principal's attention.

AP McNerney was the least competent and, in fact, very much in the way of the Principal in running the school. However, he was senior to all the APs and held a valid Principal's Certificate. He was, at that moment, waiting for an assignment, although the glacial rate of turnover led the principal to expect that it could be months, perhaps years, before McNerney would get a school of his own. AP Norton, on the other hand, was next to the most junior of the four, but although relatively new to administration, he was extremely effective, very valuable to the principal as a "deputy principal" and quite obviously on his way up in the system. Norton therefore was clearly the principal's choice for retention, and he tentatively settled on McNerney as the AP to be "riffed."

Privately acknowledging that seniority[1] would doubtless play some role in the system-wide "riffing" process, the principal nevertheless officially sent forward McNerney's name to the District Superintendent as the AP to be dropped. Not surprisingly the District Superintendent gently blew the whistle, inquiring by telephone to the principal about the rationale for such a recommendation. Without mentioning the real, hidden agenda--"Hey, here's my chance to unload deadbeat McNerney! . . . Now if I can just get the DS to go along."--the principal spoke firmly into the telephone and proceeded to make a case for his decision as follows: "Yes, Charlie, (the DS), I know McNerney is senior, but he's the only one of the APs with a Principal's Certificate. He'd be the easiest to transfer to a principalship or at least an assistant principalship in another school. For all the other three, and particularly for AP Norton, being let go would mean being demoted to classroom-teacher status. I'm thinking of the people here...what's going to happen to them. I want to be humanitarian in all this. For morale over here, and for the welfare of the school, it would be better to cut McNerney than Norton...."

In the exchange with the DS, it was clear that the DS did not know the four APs well enough to see through this subterfuge of the principal, namely, the attempt to sack his weakest assistant. Nevertheless, the DS ruled against the principal, telling him in effect that the seniority criterion, although not hard and fast, must be the primary guideline, unless extraordinary reasons--not visible to him here--were offered.

Well, no harm done. The principal's attempted insubordination did not wash with his superior and he complied with the order to let the axe fall on Norton, as painful as that was for him. For all of the dissembling, the principal was looking out for the welfare of his school and for his own welfare as a principal in need of high caliber assistants. The system remained faithful to its rules, but a principal and a school lost a little in the process. McNerney's incompetence continued as an administrative feature of the school.

b. Mode Two: The Gentleman's Agreement--Exercises in disobedience are sometimes games of chance, initiated by the principal who gambles on a five-percent expectation that they will succeed. It is well known, for example, that the enrollment figures for a school can be manipulated in order to protect the school's standing in head-count comparisons with other buildings. Customarily, when a high school opens in September, the number of students who show up represents approximately 80 percent of the peak enrollment of that school and as the weather cools, as youngsters quit their summer jobs and return to school, the attendance gradually builds to its maximum around November 1st when the official headcount for the year is taken. From this point to the end of school in June, the attendance curve is in a long glide to about 70 percent of the November peak. The principal is obviously concerned about the reading on November 1st since that provides the base-line data for allocation of teachers.

Like "Ratings Week" in the television business, the principal concentrates all of his attendance enhancement devices on the pre-November 1st period. One of the most reliable of these strategems is the manipulation of the suspension policy. If a student misbehaves during this interval his chances of suspension from school are minimal; the principal will take extraordinary measures to keep the youth somehow in the school, perhaps in a detention center--called the "Bar Room" in one school--where he sits with other miscreants barred from attending class but officially still a "member" of the student body.

By Union contract and therefore Board policy, the working ratio calls for one teacher for each 28 students. Under the force of this arithmetic, the principal counts students like gold pieces, and uses his or her discretionary powers to pad the numbers when the occasion presents itself.

Principals are sometimes put off by the dislocations engendered by Board of Education directives. In the late Seventies, principals throughout the system were instructed to provide for "permissive transfers" of their students to other schools in order to enable them to take advantage of special programs in those schools. Dubbed "Access to Excellence,"[2] the program's advertised objective was to enhance educational opportunity,[3] but its primary purpose was to increase the voluntary cross-flow of races throughout the system in order to foreclose the possibility of Justice Department-ordered or, worse, court-ordered desegregation schemes. However, those transfers were to be for only part of a school day, with the students being bussed to and from the receiving school within the normal schedule.

Two principals in neighboring schools, each with a receiving "Access" program, recognized immediately that full compliance would affect their two schools markedly. Since one school was predominantly black, the other predominantly white, heavy transfer traffic between the two would make a significant contribution to desegregation of students. However, the part-day arrangement meant that the participating students would lose the equivalent of a class period getting to the alternate school and another class period returning, thus canceling approximately 20 percent of their instructional day. Recognizing this as an unconscionable price to pay for even so laudable an opportunity, the two principals quietly decided between themselves that they would take steps to discourage transfers between their two schools. By this action, the two principals were, of course, frustrating Board of Education policy, but in so doing they were also protecting the educational instruction time of their own students, a bargain they both felt worth the risk of defiance.

c. Mode Three: Planned Delinquency on Deadlines--Our observations of school principals also reveal a more substantial form of counter-bureaucratic behavior: The deliberate refusal to meet deadlines set by superiors. As is well known in the education business, school principals are inundated with paper work in the course of managing a school. Some of the paper, to be sure, represents vital and important subject matter, e.g., requisitions for supplies or equipment, vouchers for reimbursement of expenditures, paysheets authorizing the issuing of checks to subordinates, etc. But at the other end of the spectrum are the endless memoranda from superiors or their staff people requesting a hundred kinds of information about the school. To the working principal, concerned with students, faculty and the vitality of the educational program, these requests have no relationship to teaching and learning. They seem to have come from another planet and, in the principal's eyes, represent make-work for "the bureaucrats downtown." A steady analysis of the paper flow of a large school system does indeed suggest that a major part of the motivation for requesting information is simply the realization that it can be collected. A Parkinson's Law therefore operates in which the mere availability of information becomes a major criterion for its necessity.

In the chain-of-command nexus, the principal is expected to mobilize the resources in his or her school to gather the information requested. In some cases the manpower required for such work is considerable and is not confined to clerks and stenographers (for whom information retrieval is part of the job) but spills over into the routines of busy staff and faculty personnel. Can the principal afford to divert the energies of highly paid professionals to this kind of labor? If the information asked for is perceived to be merely raw material for the make-work staffers downtown who look for something to do and therefore generate their own work, the answer is clearly No. In this circumstance, the principal must devise some method for protecting his staff from such trivial intrusions and concoct a low profile avenue of defiance toward the system.

For some principals, this takes the form of refraining from providing the information at the appointed deadline. In the abstract, this may sound risky. But the principal knows from experience that some deadlines are firm and others are soft, some information requesters are "data mad" and serious, while others are nine-to-five time-servers. The principal therefore cocks an ear to await the first call from the downtown staffer asking "Where is the information?" The promptness of this call following the deadline is the key signal to the principal. If it takes days or weeks for this call to arrive, the principal can be reasonally certain that his delinquency has paid off; the system does not really need this information. If the call comes quickly and the voice on the other end has a timbre of urgency, then the forces can be mobilized for gathering the data.

Sometimes principals can learn to manipulate the deadlines on their own behalf. The refusal to meet a deadline, if practiced by enough principals simultaneously on the same piece of business, can effectively render the deadline meaningless. Thus, principals in league with one another and sensing the pointlessness of the information asked for, can agree to drag their feet in hopes that a more reasonable, postponed deadline can be set, or that the request can be abandoned altogether.

Finally, the astute principal can sometimes forecast a postponement ordered by the staffer himself, thus rendering the original deadline empty of force. On one occasion, a principal was asked to submit in 48 hours the names of teachers on the school's staff designated for summer school service. Through other channels, the principal was already aware that such a request had no purpose since the curriculum of the summer school program had not yet been set. Since staffing always follows upon program decisions, the principal ignored the deadline and quietly waited for the downtown staffer to announce that the information would be collected at a later date. Once again, the routines of a busy school had been shielded from the invasions of the bureaucratic mentality.

d. Mode Four: The Literal Response--Our on-site participation in the work of the school principal also reveals that principals are sometimes prepared to play "hard ball" with their insubordinate conduct. Perhaps the most artistic and foolproof mode of this more strenuous form of disobedience consists in disobeying an instruction by following it literally. In this situation, the principal, on receiving an order from a superior, understands full well what information is called for. However, a close reading of the detailed instructions reveals that if they are followed to the letter, the desired information will not be forthcoming. Thus, instead of taking the trouble to inform the superior of this flaw in the instructions or unilaterally correcting the instructions and responding to them in their new, edited form, the shrewd principal will quietly inform the assistants to put together a report following the guidelines precisely.

What is eventually forwarded to the superior is therefore useless "garbage," and the principal knows it. But he or she also knows that the problem will be spotted eventually among those who originally asked for the information, and that a new, more carefully written instruction will soon be promulgated.

The value of this strategem is that it has two edges: As a defensive tactic, it protects the school's staff from unnecessary hours spent on gathering the more spphisticated information (what the superior really wants), and as an offensive weapon, it embarrasses the superior's staffers, puts them on the defensive, and temporarily neutralizes their enthusiasm for thinking up new "studies" and "reports" requiring more exasperating data.

During the late Seventies, school systems throughout the nation, especially those in large, urban centers, were required to file periodic racial composition reports with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. These reports were ostensibly designed to provide base-line data by which desegregation programs could be developed.

On the occasion of one of these Federal requests, the Superintendent's headquarters personnel, customarily referred to as "Downtown," issued a comprehensive command to the city's twenty-seven school districts. Each principal was to cause to be conducted in his or her school a census of the student body to identify the race of each student. The forms sent forward to facilitate such a census employed the standard categories of the U.S. Census Bureau, and in other ways resembled the routine language of government-generated questionnaires.

The District Superintendent's staff further instructed that at the high school level, the forms were to be filled out by the students themselves, a specification betraying the District staff's paranoia in dealing with such sensitive information as race identity.

When the students got the forms, and as the principal had half expected, they began to make a game out of the question asking them directly about their race. Seeing in the small print some of the sub-headings under the major categories, many of them became intrigued with the sound of "Samoan, "Eskimo," and "Aleut," and accordingly identified themselves in the appropriate box as a member of one of these groups. As word got around the school, the practice of mis-identifying oneself came to be a badge of mild protest by the students against this kind of intrusion into their lives.

The results, of course, were chaotic. In a large high school with approximately sixty percent white, thirty percent black and ten percent Hispanic, the principal's cursory inspection of the questionairres revealed that in "actual fact" over one-sixth of the students were Aleuts or Eskimos! With a straight face and without comment, the principal boxed up the questionnaires and returned them for tabulating to the District Office.

## 3. Creative Insubordination and Administrative Theory

It is obvious that in the ongoing dynamic of principaling, as of other modes of managerial work, there is considerable room for maneuver for which the table of organization does not make provision. In these areas of latitude, discretionary behavior becomes both more possible and more visible. One principal, commenting on this phenomenon, spoke very directly about her own style: "I don't break any rules; I just bend a few now and then."

For the conscientious principal, the objective is to use the organizational apparatus in such a way that the ultimate client, the student, is most adequately served. This may mean, at times, that the organizational apparatus, and the chain of command in particular, must be used against itself in order to render the institution's actions humane as well as efficient. What is referred to above as counter-bureaucratic behavior is not only a survival mechanism for beleaguered principals but a balance weight to counteract the seemingly anti-educational forces constantly at work in large school systems.

## Footnotes

[1] Although assistant principals are not unionized, it is customary to follow the procedures of the Teachers Union and the Principals Association, both of whom operate on the seniority principle.

[2] One principal, reviewing with his assistant principal the records of students recommended for being dropped from school, offered the aside: "This is what I call my 'Access to Exit' program."

[3] The Mayor called it a "puff piece."

## VII-B. SHORT-CIRCUITING THE LABYRINTH

### To Hell with the S.O.P.

### 1. Introduction

The conventional view of a large city school system conjures up an image of a vast labyrinth, an intricate rat's maze containing complex subunits awkwardly interrelated and difficult to manage. Finding one's way through this labyrinth has been a perennial preoccupation of administrators. Necessarily, when patience flags, the typical administrator will attempt to speed up the routine processes of the bureaucracy by maneuvering through spur-of-the-moment shortcuts to get the work done.

In our modern-day understanding of organizational dynamics, this well-established practice of short-circuiting the bureaucracy may not be all bad. In fact, school bureaucracies survive partly because good administrators are not afraid to use their discretionary decision-making powers to speed up otherwise tedious and turtle-paced procedures. Such actions help school systems reach their goals in spite of the hard-to-manage bureaucratic structure. Thus, short-circuiting the labyrinth may be a form of anti-bureaucratic behavior that actually ensures the survival of the system itself.

Our research has shown that school principals use their discretionary decision-making powers in relation to the community inside the school building, the community outside, the overall organizational hierarchy, and on behalf of their own occupational needs and career aspirations. Short-circuiting behavior may affect several of these spheres simultaneously, as we see in the following examples.

### 2. Wielding "the community" as an ad hoc weapon

The ability of a principal to mobilize community support often has considerable impact upon his effectiveness. The school building, or subunit within the system, gains power vis-a-vis the larger system when community support is available. Thus a strongly supportive community is a valuable resource which the principal can use to accomplish school goals. One principal used her discretionary decision-making power to force a decision that the bureaucracy refused to make until community pressure was brought to bear.

Dr. Faye Daniel, the principal of a near-westside elementary school, might be described as ambitious, aggressive and definitely the "boss" within her building. Because of dual chains-of-command for educational program and building maintenance, Dr. Daniel found she had no direct jurisdiction over the building engineers with whom she worked every day. Most principals are able, by using good personal relations, to work effectively within a system that separates building maintenance from the instructional activities. Dr. Daniel, however, because of her idiosyncratic personality and her special style of principaling, required full and complete control of every activity in her school building. This led to increasingly difficult confrontations with the chief engineer, Mr. Joseph Fried. Eventually, the relationship deteriorated to a point at which the everyday functions of the engineer stopped. He would not, for example, allow his men to enter and clean the school office, nor would he respond to any of Dr. Daniel's requests.

As time passed, the situation grew increasingly embarassing, and the teachers and parents began to talk openly about the problem. At first, Dr. Daniel sought the assistance of her district superintendent. But he could not be of much help. Because of the dual structure, he had no jurisdiction over the engineers either. He had to work with his counterpart at the district level in resolving a problem such as the one created by Dr. Daniel and Mr. Fried. Taking another tack, Dr. Daniel requested the district superintendent to prevail upon the district engineer supervisor to transfer Dr. Fried. But the superintendent refused, claiming that Dr. Daniel would have to learn to get along with her engineer. As Dr. Daniel was trying to resolve the problem through the bureaucratic structure, services performed by the engineering staff came to a virtual standstill. This brought parents and teachers into the controversy because snow was not getting properly removed from the sidewalks nor were certain necessary classroom repairs being made. When an incident grew out of the failure of the engineering staff to repair a classroom closet lock for a teacher, it became clear that the principal would have to abandon her efforts to work within the school hierarchy.

The principal, Dr. Daniel, had excellent community support in this struggle to get the engineer transferred because parents were concerned about the safety of their children. Four parents came to Dr. Daniel asking her to write a letter to the General Superintendent of Schools to facilitate solution of the problem. Dr. Daniel quickly suggested that such a letter would have more impact if it came from the community. Further, she subtly offered to assist in the writing of the letter if they would agree to have it signed by as many community people as possible. The letter was written and sent, with a copy to the district superintendent. Within days the engineer was transferred.

### 3. Management by loophole

In the Chicago schools, the procedure for obtaining substitute teachers specifies that the principal must first alert the central office "Sub Center" of his needs each day, and then await the arrival of the substitutes designated by the Center. The procedure seems to work well in some parts of the city but not in others. Mr. James Broder was principal of a large westside school in a neighborhood where substitutes were reluctant to come. Thus he found that he was fortunate if one out of five of his empty classrooms was covered on a typical day. It became apparent to Mr. Broder that he would have to devise an alternate substitute hiring procedure that would allow him to develop his own cadre of people to fill vacant teaching positions. Mr. Broder discovered, after careful study of procedures, that the Central Office did not compare the records of the Sub Center with the pay authorization forms signed by the principal and submitted each pay period by substitute teachers. This was, of course, the loophole that Mr. Broder needed to establish his own cadre of substitutes. Since there was no check made on the pay authorization forms, it was possible for Mr. Broder to call directly those substitutes who were willing to work in his school. This loophole meant that Sub Center had no record of his cadre, and therefore was not in a position to challenge his "private employment agency."

The short-circuit procedure worked because the subunit (Mr. Broder) withheld important information needed to maintain the established procedure. By denying information to the system the school gained the power it needed to manage its own system for ensuring that classrooms were adequately staffed with substitute teachers. Again, in this example, the discretionary decision-making power of the principal allowed the instructional program to function normally even though a form of short-circuiting was being employed.

### 4. Shortcuts to image building

Image building is important to local school principals. Our research indicates that schools with a good reputation get special consideration from the Central Office. Thus, a principal's ability to advertise the special qualities of his school ensures attention to requests for additional help, needed supplies or special favors. The extent to which a principal will go to short-circuit the system in order to build his school's image is illustrated in the following example.

A school in a lower middle-class, predominantly black neighborhood on the South side of Chicago was assigned two additional reading teachers. They were provided mainly because of the serious need for remedial reading help in the school. But the principal, Ms. Grace Lights, chose to put those two teachers to work in a way that was not intended. In sending out the notice concerning additional reading manpower, Ms. Lights instructed teachers to send for special help only those children who already were reading very nearly at grade level rather than the really poor readers. This decision mystified the researchers. Why would the principal specify that the better students be sent to these special teachers? How could the principal explain such a decision professionally, even morally? Eventually, the question was answered and the principal provided a justification, or at least a rationalization, for her action. This judgment can be understood only in the context of enhancing the school's image within the larger educational organization.

As noted above, resources are sometimes allocated to the schools based on the reputation of the school. At the time the researchers were observing this principal, the Chicago newspapers had just published the reading scores of all schools in the city. Considerable acclaim had been accorded those lower middle-class schools which showed sharp increases in reading test scores. It also became apparent to Ms. Lights that the long-run attention of headquarters officers and permanent upgrading of resources would be accorded those schools which exhibited significant increases in reading scores. Ms. Lights studied what happened when far-below-grade-level readers had been provided additional help. The answer: Not much. She reluctantly concluded that little reading gain could be expected from these very slow children. Instead, she calculated that she could get more measurable increase in reading scores by concentrating on the near-to-grade-level readers. Hence, she felt she could get more mileage out of the two reading specialists by putting their services at the disposal of the better students.

## 5. New wine in old bottles

Our research indicates that principals must often modify policies and adapt them to the needs, interests and "tolerance levels" of local parents. The principal is in the critical position of understanding what the school system, qua system, is trying to accomplish through a particular directive or order; but he or she is also in the critical position of knowing what the community will "buy." Often it is not possible to adapt policy without, either deliberately or accidentally short-circuiting the system.

Several years ago, Chicago Public Schools adopted a competency based reading program known as the Continuous Progress Program. Students are expected to master a sequence of competencies within fourteen specified competency levels (levels A-N). This program was introduced to the system after decades of using the traditional K-8 system of grade levels. The new system posed serious problems of interpretation and communication both with teachers and with parents. For the teachers, it introduced a very unpopular system of record-keeping which required considerable time for recording large numbers of competencies. For parents, it seemed to cause unnecessary confusion at a time when the traditional K-8 levels were well understood. The role of the principal became crucial both in helping the teachers find efficient means of record-keeping and in working with parents.

When working with the Continuous Progress Program, the principal translated the curriculum into different languages depending on the audience. With teachers, of course, the principal always spoke in terms of the new categories: Levels A, B, C, D, etc.. To make the program work, that is to say, the teachers had to be educated in a new terminology. But since parents were most comfortable with the traditional grade level designations--First, Second, Third, etc.--the principal often saved time and effort by showing how Continuous Progress worked within the conventional grading system, fearing that a technical explanation would only stir up trouble. In a major directive of this sort, headquarters planners expect that the principal will educate not just the teachers, but parents and interested laymen, in the new system. But the short-circuiting behavior, in which new concepts are delivered to the community under old rubrics, gets the job done with the least fuss.

## 6. The spontaneous policy statement

School principals have discretionary power to mold parental expectations of the school in a way which will enhance the school's repute in the neighborhood. Principals are also expected to anticipate the problems and uncertainties surrounding the school system and to manage to ward off or deflate potential trouble before it gets out of control.

Ms. Janet Gross, principal of a large elementary school on the near-north side of the city had left the school building one evening at 4:30 p.m. not realizing that a seven year old girl was still waiting to be picked up by a parent. The child had been sitting down between the inner and outer doors of the main entrance so she was not visible to Ms. Gross as Ms. Gross left the building through a rear door. When Ms. Gross arrived at school the next morning, she was greeted by an extremely angry mother who said that she was going to have Ms. Gross arrested for leaving her child in the doorway. The angry mother had already alerted the Parent Council president and the district superintendent's office. Ms. Gross could see that this was going to be a difficult matter to resolve.

The angry parent came into Ms. Gross' office in a state of high agitation. The principal apologized and promised that such a thing would not happen again. The parent finally left after promising not to let the matter drop.

A number of thoughts went through Ms. Gross' mind. Is it her responsibility to take care of a child at 4:30 p.m.? Where was the clean-up crew? What could be done to establish a school policy to ensure that such an incident as this did not recur? Ms. Gross turned immediately to the chief engineer in the building with whom she got along extremely well. In fact, he thought very highly of her and wanted to show his appreciation for a number of kind words she had spoken on his behalf to his supervisor. When told the story, the engineer said that after 4:30 p.m. he and his staff would serve as "sitters" for children whose parents were delayed picking them up. He said that this promise could be written up and sent to parents in the school newsletter. The parents were to be informed that after 4:30 p.m. they could, in an emergency, pick up their child in the engineer's office.

Ms. Gross thought that the procedure created by the engineer would solve the problem and accordingly sent out such a notice to all parents that day. She acted hastily in order to prevent an uproar in the community over the incident but also to quickly establish a school policy statement. Upon careful study of the Board of Education policy on this matter and after consultation with the Chicago Principals Association, Ms. Gross learned that as principal she did not bear legal responsibility for children after 4:30 p.m. and further that establishing such policy was frowned upon by the Board. But she felt in this case, her policy was necessary and she also felt that she knew the community demanded responsiveness rather than legal opinions on this matter. Thus she maintained and defended her policy.

Here is a case of a principal short-circuiting the hierarchy by actually acting without consulting with superiors prior to announcing her decision. Such action is unusual on the part of principals but it demonstrates Ms. Gross' determination on this matter. In effect, Ms. Cross short-circuited the system by quickly creating a policy statement, then publishing it before it could be questioned. She used her discretion boldly in this case of child safety. We shall not here question the wisdom of her decision. The point is that the system of checks and balances on the principal was short-circuited in this case. The goal of warding off a potential community problem was achieved by the principal's swift decisiveness.

### 7. The old-crony network

Principals, our research reveals, are often frustrated by the lack of reward and absence of immediate gratification in their efforts to improve the instructional programs of their schools. Frustration and defeat are much more common than success as the principal works to improve the school. For this reason principals seek tasks which will lead to an "end product," a sense of closure in an otherwise open-ended routine.

We draw here upon an example used earlier in this report in which we illustrated how a principal can create an excellent image internally within the system by being a "manipulator" of the bureaucracy. The same example illustrates how a principal can short-circuit the system to accomplish a job which has considerable psychological satisfaction as its reward.

The reader may recall the principal whose image rested on the fact that she was able to get "anything she wants" for her school. She is successful at getting supplies and even extra help by calling upon an elaborate network of friends in the system. She pointed out to the researchers that she could short-circuit the bureaucracy to accomplish even the most difficult assignment; the most complex problem could be handled through her network. During the time she was being observed, a bilingual teacher resigned from her school. Bilingual teachers, fluent in both English and Spanish are hard to find. But this principal saw the problem as a minor one. She knew that a call to the Bilingual Office of the Board of Education would be fruitless, so she put her informal network of friends into operation. With only a few telephone calls she was able to find at least three qualified bilingual teachers willing to work at her school. Because of her long history of developing relationships and working with people in the system, this principal had acquired a good reputation for her school. The good reputation and her image as a "doer" made short-circuiting the system easier than it would be for other principals. It should be noted, though, that this example again illustrates that some short-circuiting of the bureaucracy has a positive effect on the school as a whole. A bilingual teacher was found and the children were well served.

### 8. Short-circuiting from necessity

Short-circuiting of the bureaucracy is often expected, as standard operating behavior, by both principals and hierarchical superiors. Principals are of course constantly on the receiving end of the school district's distributions of instructional materials, office supplies, payroll checks, items of school equipment, and the never-ending flow of records and report forms. The bureaucracy makes frequent errors in the distribution of all of this, and it is usually left to the building principal to sort everything out, to find the materials needed by or intended for his school, and to let fellow principals know when he has something intended for them.

Ruth Donegan, the principal of a south-westside elementary school, was informed by her clerk that they were hundreds of report cards short in preparing for the first (fall) distribution of student reports "this coming Friday." The new cards had just arrived from the downtown printing office this morning (Tuesday), and a quick count had revealed the shortage. Donegan quickly began phoning fellow principals (acquaintances around the city), asking for extra cards. She found twenty-five cards here, another fifty there, etc..

Arrangements were then made to pick the cards up or have them dropped off; the regular school-to-school mail routes (known as "The Pony Express") couldn't be depended upon to accomplish the transfer in time. In responding to the researcher's question about all of this (for it took the principal most of the morning to find the extra cards she needed), Donegan explained that this happens all the time, that it wouldn't help to ask for extra cards to be sent from downtown ("it would take weeks"), and that "anyway, everyone expects the principals to just handle these kinds of problems themselves."

## 9. Conclusion--short-circuiting and administrative theory

In all of the above examples, we see illustrations of the mid-bureaucracy administrator wrestling with the practical realities of organizational life. The bureaucracy above grinds out its directives, commands, policy initiatives and marching orders. But when these pronouncements arrive at the front lines, their meaning acquires a new complexion. Seen in the light of real people jockeying for position in a complicated environment--students, teachers, parents, administrators--these directives sometimes appear workable only with on-the-spot maneuvers designed ad hoc by the principal.

It is clear that such short-circuiting behavior can often facilitate the workings of the bureaucracy. As we have seen, the job got done and got done more swiftly and expeditiously than would have been the case had the principal allowed the bureaucratic machinery to churn out a solution. But it is also clear that counter-bureaucratic behavior, even that done for the best of motives, is only a marginal category of discretionary decision-making. For one thing, in the hands of an inept principal, short-circuiting can create more problems than it solves. Moreover, precisely because it is ad hoc behavior, it is dangerous to generalize it to the larger sphere of management as a whole. Finally, short-circuiting conduct, for all its benign benefits, typically does not sit well with superiors. They are responsible for the working of the whole, and too many shortcuts may, in the end, compromise the integrity of the larger enterprise.

Short-circuiting, therefore, like other discretionary gambits is an art form. It must be practiced only with a keen eye out for all of the consequences that it can lead to in the hurly-burly of school principaling.

## VII-C. THE SHIFTING CHESSBOARD: A Case Study in Productive Survival Amidst Bureaucratic Foul Up

### 1. Introduction

During the late Seventies and early Eighties, Chicago public school principals were subjected to a steady drumbeat of official commands from central headquarters:

-- Improve student achievement
-- Desegregate faculties
-- Inaugurate bilingual education
-- Provide for racial integration of student bodies in magnet schools
-- Comply with Public Law 94-142
-- Make budget cutbacks in a financial crisis

In response to each new command order, the principals of the Chicago system have struggled to acquaint themselves with new regulations and procedures handed down through the hierarchy. They have tried to bring their schools into compliance with each new guideline, to acquaint their staffs with complicated changes in procedure, and to integrate the new requirements into the ongoing instructional program of the school. The broad scope, intensity and number of new programs has made managerial difficulties sometimes seem insurmountable.

For one thing, in many schools there brews a deep anger and resentment toward the new programs. Teachers have been required to divert enormous energy away from regular programs in order to accommodate the new demands; at the same time, staff and clerical resources have been reduced. Also, the principals themselves have bridled at the seeming bureaucratic aimlessness of many of these directives, wondering with each new onslaught of paperwork, just how many evening hours are going to be chewed up trying to stay on top of the task.

Nevertheless, in spite of all, many principals seem to have made gains during this period when there seemed to be every opportunity for losing ground. In this segment, we explore some of the features of a "survival" strategy and we focus on an individual principal's productive response to administrative overload.

### 2. The Shifting Chessboard

a. Mastery Learning--The issue of academic quality has stalked the Chicago public schools for decades. Within the system, the folk wisdom has always accepted the inevitability of a mixed system of some poor schools, many good schools, and a few schools serving as outposts of excellence. Traditionally, students have been assigned to schools on the basis of their home residence; therefore, a family's selection of a neighborhood to buy or rent in was an important link to the anticipated quality of instruction. The exception to the residency rule has been represented by those few, specialized schools that accepted only the finest applicants from throughout the city. These institutions enjoyed outstanding reputations, and competition to enter them has typically been stiff.

In the late 1970s nationally normed achievement tests revealed that the average public school student in Chicago scored well below the national norm. These statistics documented a conclusion which the system's critics had arrived at independently, namely, that a substantial number of public schools were inferior academically. Part of this was due to the perpetuation of outmoded practices such as the social promotion of failing students to higher grades in order to keep them with their age-mates. The situation became so bad that year after year, students who had been promoted through the grades according to this policy were graduated from high school without being able to read, even at an elementary school level. Because students were graded in comparison to the performance of their classmates, students in some schools were promoted with A and B grades who had learned far less than their counterparts in other schools with C and D grades.

To address this situation a system-wide instructional program was adopted for every elementary school classroom in the city. The elementary school was thoroughly restructured. Grades one through eight were abolished and replaced with age groupings. In this way classmates could be agemates regardless of academic achievement. In addition, beginning with the reading curriculum, hundreds of individual reading skills were identified and classified at levels ranging from A to K. Criterion referenced tests were developed for each level. It was then determined which levels corresponded to which groups for students to be considered "on level" (the right number of skills for their age),"over age" (too few skills for their age), or "above level" (more skills than would be expected for their age).

Once this elaborate testing and classification system was developed, the problem of bringing students to their age level in reading was addressed. Teachers were instructed to test each student to diagnose his or her reading level, to develop a learning plan for each student outlining which skills were to be taken up next, and then to retest to learn whether the new skills had been learned. In this way the learning program would be individualized and each student could show "continuous progress" in reading achievement. Benjamin Bloom, the architect of the plan, lectured a required gathering of all Chicago school principals to teach them about mastery learning so that they might better guide their faculty in implementing the concept.

Many found the new system to be intellectually stimulating and promising. Others criticized it. Regardless of their enthusiasm, however, every principal was soon confronted with the practical realities of testing, constructing programs, re-testing, charting progress and otherwise documenting the reading levels of every student in every elementary classroom. Principals were soon asked to report to their district superintendent every ten weeks in summary reports of their students' mastery levels. These reports included the percentage of students at each reading level, the percentage over age, on level and above age, and the number and percantage of students in each category at each level.

Since these reports were summaries of teachers' records, the principal hounded teachers to finish their reports every ten weeks. Understandably, some disenchantment with the plan developed. But not all teacher resistance was mere recalcitrance. Often the most competent teachers offered substantial critiques on the number of tests, the timing of tests, and the validity of matching specific skills to their assigned levels. An additional ruling prohibited teachers from giving A or B grades in reading to students who were not "on level."

Later the system was expanded to mathematics instruction. Principals were issued goals for the number of students in their school who should move from "over age" to "on level", and from "on level" to "above age". Their yearly evaluation from the district superintendent heavily reflected their success in reaching these production goals.

b. Faculty Desegregation--Concurrent with the introduction of the mastery learning program, the Board of Education implemented a massive desegregation plan to integrate the faculties of all schools. The plan called for en masse transfer of thousands of teachers and was followed up by complex regulations and guidelines for the subsequent transfer and reassignment of teachers to enhance desegregation. Every school suffered the loss of some teachers who were transferred to other buildings. Many teachers thus transferred "out" filed formal grievence appeals; in each of these cases, the principals of both the losing and receiving schools found themselves entangled in the problem.

For those teachers transferred "in", special orientation activities had to be designed. Often, such teachers needed help in adjusting to cultural differences in parents and students in their new school. Many had to travel long distances to their new assignment, a situation that contributed to tardiness and absences among some teachers. The younger teachers were often transferred out of a school where they were comfortable, enjoyed good peer relationships and had found their niche. For them a new assignment represented starting over with a new group, where many old timers had established peer norms and were anxious to protect their turf if the new teachers stepped onto their territory. In order to re-establish a cooperative spirit within the faculty and reinforce the norms for behavior that prevailed in the school, many principals felt obligated to take special steps to socialize new teachers. They also were forced into the necessity to arrange reassignments for new teachers who could not or simply would not fit in.

c. Bilingual Programs-- Bilingual programs were added to many schools in the late 1970s and early 1980. Although the largest number of programs were for Spanish speaking students, programs in many other languages were introduced. In addition to the bilingual teachers, teacher aides were assigned to the bilingual programs. Special funds were appropriated for instructional materials. To locate students for these programs a comprehensive testing program was developed to determine the English language proficiency of every student from a home where a language other than English was spoken. The tests were conducted at the school level which entailed mobilizing teachers to test and score the diagnostic instruments. The special programs were administered through a separate set of regulations, e.g., purchasing forms for materials were different from the usual order forms.

In addition to housing these programs, principals had to ease relations between the teachers in special programs and regular teachers. In one case, regular teachers demanded to know why the bilingual teachers did not take their share of supervisory duty. In another case, regular teachers felt that students were being held too long in the special program when they should be graduated into the regular program. This fight for students was heightened as regular teachers were let go because of enrollment declines and bilingual teachers were added or dropped according to the number of bilingual students.

d. Student Desegregation--During the same period, a student desegregation plan was announced. The Board of Education had for several years been engaged in negotiations with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare on the student desegregation issue. To hold off an order to achieve integration through mandatory busing, the Board of Education expanded the magnet school concept in hopes of integrating enough schools to satisfy federal requirements. Overnight, several schools were declared specialty schools and students were encouraged to apply.

e. Special Education Mandates--The same period saw a growth in special education programs and the passage of Public Law 94-142. In addition to housing special programs and adding non-regular teachers to the faculty, the principals were responsible for administering the programs using a complex set of regulations and procedures. Stringent documentation was required for testing and evaluating students, placing them in appropriate programs, involving parents, planning instructional programs for each student, maintaining achievement records, conducting yearly reviews of each student's placement and achievement, and comprehensive re-testing of each student every three years. In addition to maintaining the documents related to these tasks, principals were asked to coordinate the various professionals whose participation was required. These included the teacher, parents, psychologist, nurse, social worker, speech therapist, and various coordinators from the district offices.

f. Declining enrollments--The passing of the baby boom bulge in the early 1970s affected all schools but was especially devastating to the high schools. As the number of students plummeted, the Union contract staffing formula forced the administration to cut staff subject by subject. These cuts reduced the breadth of offerings in high school programs, and put a premium on "utility infielder" types of teachers. For example, unless a teacher could teach both German and French, a position cut in foreign languages meant losing either the German or French teacher. When these teachers were dropped, they had the right to replace a teacher in that subject with less seniority anywhere else in the system. This "supernumerary rule" and the consequent "bumping" process engendered chaotic staff turnover throughout the system.

g. Fiscal crisis--In the winter of 1979-80, the most traumatic upheaval of all took place. After years of deficit spending, and "roll-over" borrowing (borrowing funds to repay debts from earlier borrowing), and using protected accounts for operating expenses, the Chicago Board of Education was threatened with bankruptcy when major banks refused to extend further credit. The immediate effect of this crisis was a shortage in cash flow in which teachers' paychecks could not be issued. Teachers were not paid for several weeks, the General Superintendent resigned. The teachers, frustrated by uncertain paydays, struck the schools and shut them down. The Mayor dismissed the old school board and appointed a new one.

The long-term effect was soon recognized by everyone. The school system was living far beyond its means, and massive cutbacks in the annual operating budget were seen as necessary. As the field work for the present study drew to a close, the entire school system--with 25,000 teachers and several thousand other employees--was thrown into a state of disconcerting shock. As the disinterested outsider viewed the system's threatened disintegration and collapse, it seemed apparent that the role of the principal in holding the lumbering apparatus together would turn out to be critical.

### 3. The Principal's Predicament

Understandably, the buffeting and upheaval of several years running left their individual marks on each principal. Taken together, however, these events began to point to major, strategic changes in the administrative role of school principals in the system.

First, principals have been forced to commit a large share of their administrative time to the study of instructions about new programs, regulations, procedures and documentation. Time spent learning new administrative tools is necessarily time spent out of the school in district meetings, special in-service meetings, and at workshops. As these responsibilities increase, the traditional role of principal as a "presence" and as a personal embodiment of a school's tone and ambiance is diminished.

Second, a new language and instructional framework accompanied each program. Principals were responsible for instructing their staff and seeing that the new programs were followed. In the mastery learning program, for example, teachers often were required to change their entire framework for teaching. Those who conceived of teaching in terms of textbooks, workbooks, lessons, presentations, practice exercises, recitations and (eventually) tests, had to adopt a new framework that stressed skill development, behavioral objectives, criterion referenced tests, resource centers and teaching specialists. Principals first had to learn and adopt the new framework themselves, before they could teach it to their staffs or administer it competently.

Third, and more troubling, many of the changes introduced in recent years were not compatible. The seniority rule, for example, continually collides with the faculty integration guidelines. A black gym teacher, may be bumped by a white supernumerary. The loss of the black teacher may nudge the school out of compliance with the integration guidelines that establish the ratio of minority to majority teachers. These inconsistencies contribute to a more general cynicism about the system. A "damned if you do and damned if you don't" attitude arises from such experiences. There is a growing doubt whether the system is systematic. It often appears as a free wheeling confusion of proliferating policies, procedures, formats and formulas.

Fourth and perhaps most devastating, each program carries on its coat-tails new requirements for reports, documentation and processing forms. The increased paperwork is a constant complaint. Principals must instruct their teachers in the use of each survey or report form, browbeat them to complete it, check each teacher's entry for accuracy, and reduce these data to the correct report format. The time devoted to these tasks, by teachers and principals, can be extensive, particularly if many different programs are introduced at the same time.

The paper work is given high priority by the central administration. These reports supply the critical information by which central officers gauge the effectiveness and utility of new programs. In addition to their emotional investment in successful programs, these headquarters officers are driven by their need to show a credible response to the demands and criticisms of external groups and agencies. They expect the principal to manage the paperwork from the school, making sure it is accurate and turned in on time.

### 4. A Case Study in Productive Survival Amidst Bureaucratic Foul Up

When enrollment at the Baker elementary school dropped to 350 students, the Board of Education decided to close it and distribute its students among other schools in the nearby community. This decision met with such public outcry, however, that the Board relented and agreed not to close the school. Instead, Baker was reclassified as a branch of the Palmer school which was one mile east. Faye Harris, principal at Palmer, thereby became principal of two schools that served the same white, middle class community on Chicago's north side.

Later in the school year the Superintendent announced plans for a student desegregation program. Harris was astounded when she read the description of the plan. It named the Baker school as a specialized Liberal Arts Academy. At first she assumed that a new principal would be appointed to develop the academy. Then she was informed that she would remain principal at both schools, placing her in the unique position of concurrently principaling a neighborhood elementary school and a specialized magnet elementary school.

All special reports and surveys would be done twice. This would include administering the Functional Language Assessment for bilingual students, and all racial/ethnic surveys for both schools.

Harris would meet with each faculty, conduct in-service training for each, and write weekly bulletins that included instructions to both faculties. Yearly calendars and daily schedules would be maintained for both schools. Bus schedules would be issued and updated for the magnet and for special programs introduced at the neighborhood school.

There were two PTAs, each with separate meetings and projects. Each school had an open house, a science fair, an art fair and book fair. Each school sponsored fundraising events. Newsletters were written for parents of children at each school.

Harris wrote yearly goals for each school and separate principal's objectives. She had an office in each school where she spent some time each day. In addition she tried to tour each school at least once each day. In particular she concentrated on "hitting the spots where we have new people."

During the time when the academy took form as a specialty school, several new programs were also introduced at the neighborhood school. These included a program for gifted students, a permissive transfer program that brought black students from the inner city to the Palmer school, special education programs for children with learning disabilities and emotional disorders, and several bilingual programs. These programs diversified the student population at the neighborhood school and added a number of non-regular teachers and staff.

Converting a branch school into a magnet academy was difficult because of many ambiguities concerning the nature of the magnets and their relationship to neighborhood schools. It was not even clear at the onset what a Liberal Arts Academy for elementary students was. Was it a school for outstanding students where they learned faster than they would at a neighborhood school? If so, did that imply that neighborhood schools failed to serve their better students? After many meetings discussing these questions with principals of other new academies, Harris maintained that the liberal arts emphasis of the magnet school made it "different, not better" than the neighborhood school. The academy combined the regular curriculum of the Board of Education with a humanities perspective that included critical thinking skills, music, art, literature and foreign language. Better students from throughout the city might benefit from these enrichment opportunities. In this way she tried to generate excitement over the new school without appearing to criticize the quality of instruction in neighborhood schools. Furthermore, she stressed the racial integration of the school as an asset in planning instruction and building a positive school image.

Having settled on what the academy would offer, her next step was to develop a program that matched. Harris was disheartened to learn that the transition would have to be made with no change in faculty at the branch. Some additional teacher aides, a little extra money for materials and an extra administrator who would work on recruiting and transporting students to the magnet were added. Furthermore, since the branch school already had a student body, these students were given the option of remaining at the magnet for at least one year, regardless of their ability. Students in the upper stanines from around the city were added to this original group.

Harris complained about these constraints. Still, during the summer before the magnet opened, she took several steps that established a basis for making the transition from branch school to magnet academy.

She insisted that she select her administrative team, consisting of a teacher counselor, a curriculum specialist and a teacher administrator. She restructured the organization of the school along departmental lines. She initiated a French and music program, emphasizing strengths of her branch faculty. She initiated a parents' board of governors for the school that included parents of students from throughout the city as well as those from the neighborhood. She put in motion requests to replace some current faculty with teachers who possessed strengths that would further diversify the enrichment offerings of the academic program.

When school started she instructed teachers to begin work immediately with parents whose children might not be able to keep pace with the academic intensity at the magnet. She also worked to upgrade the faculty through a series of training sessions at faculty meetings. Although she acknowledged the difficulty in making the transition from branch to magnet, she saw two strong items in her favor. One was that both neighborhood and bussed students were at the magnet because they and their parents chose to be there. The element of choice gave the school a unique edge in that it created enthusiasm for the school and its purpose. It also implied that students who did not fit in could be asked to leave. The second advantage was the extremely small size of the school. She felt that this friendly and more intimate size would, of itself, make the school seem special and desirable.

Harris also requested that she be given a full-time Assistant Principal at the neighborhood school. She continued to press her district superintendent on this until mid-year when her request was granted. In this way a constant administrative presence was maintained in the neighborhood school, even though Harris' responsibilities to the magnet took her out of the building for about one-half of each school day.

Harris felt that a principal could become buried in paperwork without a plan to manage it. Her system centered on "seeing every piece of mail that comes into this office." To do so, she personally opened the mail that arrived at each school. Before routing materials on to her staff, she took note of all requests for information, due dates, reporting formats and other instructions. She also maintained files of bulletins, policy changes and newly issued forms. From this information, she formed a picture of all the things her staff was working on, what their time tables were, and where they were in their work. These items were stored in her memory. As deadlines approached, she cued her staff to meet their timetables. She would not allow people to put things off or set things aside to be forgotten. She described herself as the one who is "pushing the train down the paper trail." Harris also required that her staff write down every record or report that they sent from the school. Exit files included the item sent, the day and to whom it was sent.

Occasionally, some material reached her desk that had to be studied carefully before it was sent to the appropriate staff. Harris took this material home to read, a practice consistant with her open space concept for monitoring administrative events. Her office door was kept open, enabling her to overhear what took place in the main office. She also kept open space between her desk and her assistants' work areas. This enabled her concurrently to listen in on a conversation between parents and a clerk in the main office, between the adjustment teacher and a child in the administration room, and between a teacher and her assistant principal concerning a disciplinary matter. She thereby stayed in contact with the "central nervous system" of the school and aware of the problems that were brought to her staff.

Harris was careful to divide her time between the two schools. When she was at one school, she did not do business for the other school. Parents, teachers and central personnel were asked to raise items with the administrative assistants, who then brought them up with Harris. In this way she could cover several items in a brief catch-up meeting with the assistants, rather than have to make phone calls to learn what each person needed from her. Most tasks were delegated to her assistants. Harris did offer advice, authorize resources and observe their work. When situations proved to be particularly troublesome or difficult, she stepped in and addressed the problem. This troubleshooting style allowed her to save her personal involvement for those circumstances that might not work out well otherwise.

Over the years, Harris built several files that covered all the routine administrative tasks in schools. She maintained files of past materials pertaining to such repeating events as graduation, promotion, discipline, parental permission, registration, and awards banquets. When a routine task came up, she referred to the file and used her backlog of materials to help her quickly compose letters, bulletins, instructions and invitations. Instead of starting from scratch, materials that served well in the past were updated by changing the names, dates, places and other details.

Harris worked out several systems for teachers that helped them get their paperwork out of the way quickly and accurately. Procedures for routine tasks such as taking attendance and instructing substitute teachers were spelled out in a handbook she distributed to all new teachers at both schools. This helped them quickly learn how such things were done under Harris.

Harris was constantly looking for effective ways to short cut time consuming paperwork. For example, during one school year several different surveys were administered to determine different trends in the racial and ethnic makeup of the student body. Each survey was distributed to each teacher and then summarized for the school by the administrators. This repeated task led Harris to request that in the future the racial and ethnic origins of students be noted at registration, when parents are present to provide accurate information. The clerks could complete surveys in the future by looking up the student's file, making it unnecessary to disrupt the teachers to administer a survey.

Harris's style was efficient, fast paced and crisp. She managed to keep up with the paperwork at two schools by delegating tasks to her freed assistants, prodding them to meet deadlines and, where necessary, troubleshooting difficult situations personally. She kept track of the requests and information that circulated into the school, the route they took within the school, and when and how they left the school.

Her open space concept helped her learn what her assistants were working on and the problems that had surfaced in the school. Finally, she established routines for getting routine paperwork done quickly and accurately. These procedures helped reduce the feeling in both schools that paperwork was overwhelming the staff. In the following examples, these aspects of her administration will be examined more closely.

Example One: The Paperwork Makes it Legal--Before school closed in the spring, Harris drove her staff in the neighborhood school to prepare all the paperwork for the special education students. Securing Certificates of Eligibility for each student was a time consuming task that required extensive diagnostic testing, a placement conference, planning an individualized instructional program, and parent signatures indicating their approval of the placement and program. Several pages of write-up were prepared for each student and sent to the district office to be processed by the district's special education coordinators.

During the summer, the special education services were reorganized. Special education coordinators were removed from the district offices and consolidated into five Student Service Centers. The coordinator that had worked with the Palmer school was not assigned to its new Service Center. When school opened in September, Harris had not yet been assigned a new coordinator and the Certificates of Eligibility for the school's programs had not arrived. Technically, children could not be registered in the programs until the certificates were on file in the school.

The day school opened, Harris was at the magnet school during the morning. She knew that there was always confusion over bus pick-up and drop-off procedures at the magnet on the first day. She felt she should be there to direct the bus drivers and students in the proper procedures. It was not long, however, before her assistant principal at the neighborhood school called for help. Several special education children and their parents had shown up at the school to register, but there were no Certificates of Eligibility on file for them. What should she do? Harris told her assistant that there had been some instructions from the special education coordinator before he left the district office. Harris told her to find them and see what they said. Her assistant drew a blank, not remembering any instructions. She promised to look for them and hung up.

At noon, Harris arrived at the Palmer school. She found her assistant in the supply closet, looking through boxes of papers (the school had long since outgrown its supply of metal file cabinets). Harris began to look through the boxes herself for "any communication" that offered instruction as to what was to be done to enroll students this fall. As she searched she asked rhetorically, "Why didn't they listen to us and not set up those centers until October when the students would be in place?"

Harris abandoned her search through the boxes and went to her own files on special education. There she found a "legal" list of students that were coming to the programs at Palmer. The instructions said that although the Certificates of Eligibility were not yet at the school, it would be legal to enroll these students. The document confirmed the names of students to be included in each program. The assistant asked what folder they were in. Harris told her, "We put that in there in June for September."

Harris then dialed the phone, calling the downtown central office for special education. She spoke to one of the assistants to a special education director. She explained that she was from the Palmer school which had programs in learning disabilities and behavioral disorders. She requested information about paperwork concerning incoming students. Her problem was that she did not have a certificate of eligibility for students who her previous coordinator had listed as this year's students. She explained that everything was in order for these students except for the certificate. The parents and students were in her office now, wanting to register. "I assume I should enroll them now and follow up with the certificates later."

The woman downtown told her to go ahead and enroll the students. However, she instructed Harris to get each parent to sign a statement that read, "I agree with the placement recommendation for my child pending receipt of certification of eligibility." After the parents signed the statement, the students could be legally enrolled.

Harris then raised a third issue. She explained that this pertained to the child of the president of her neighborhood school council. This child was supposed to be in the learning disabilities program at Palmer. Last spring she was assured that the placement would be ready by September. Today the parent came to register his son and learned that things were not ready. He was furious and is likely to call the special education director downtown and "everybody that he's friends with at the Board of Education." Harris gave the child's name once again and suggested that the woman downtown look up the child in this case. "Very soon," she explained, "you're going to be getting some questions about it from somebody and will be in a better position if you know something about the case when the question is put to you." She spelled out the situation once again for the woman downtown. "The child is supposed to be in a learning disabilities class and is also supposed to get speech therapy. Nobody seems to know the status of the case, though the parent was assured last spring that it was all arranged. Let me know what is happening. We need to locate the paperwork on the case so that the child can come into the program."

Example Two: Getting the Right Tools is Half the Job--During the first year that Baker school was a magnet academy, Harris spent many hours meeting with other magnet principals to plan the development of the academies. Their first priority was to select staff who could strengthen the liberal arts curriculum in each school. They realized that the supernumerary rule, and to a lesser extent the faculty desegregation guidelines,interfered with their free selection of faculty. Still, they advertised openings and spent many hours interviewing candidates who taught at other schools. Just before the end of the year Harris was informed by the personnel office that none of the teachers she had selected could be transfered to Baker. Furthermore, three of her best teachers were to be bumped and replaced by teachers with more seniority. Harris was discouraged. She had hoped that the time she and the other academy principals spent planning would lead to something. Now she said disgustedly, "I keep thinking, all that work for what?"

Harris did not take no for an answer. Before the end of the day she was on the phone speaking to the personnel office. She wanted to know what was the "easiest, fastest way to get the people I selected to fill the position?" She was told to write a letter requesting them and explaining why they were necessary to developing the academy. "I don't mind sending another letter," she told the personnel office. Later she told her assistant that things were looking up, they might get some of the staff they selected after all.

A few weeks later it was announced that the Baker school would no longer house the academy. It would move to the Waverly school; Harris would remain principal. The Waverly school was located in the same neighborhood and had been rented for several years to a private religious group. Harris remembered the school and was pleased to recall that it had a few more classrooms than the Baker school as well as a library, gymnasium, and parking lot. Immediately, she made an appointment to see the Waverly school.

Later that afternoon she and her assistant at the academy arrived for their appointment to tour the Waverly site. They both were shocked at the terrible condition in which they found the comparatively new building. There was evidence of extensive roof leakage and poor ventilation. The building was filthy. Garbage was dumped in closets and the ragged, dirty remnants of shades hung at the windows. Checking revealed a disconnected fire alarm system and many destroyed locks.

After the tour Harris and her assistant returned to the Baker site to review their impressions. They did not dwell on the dirt and disorder they had seen. Instead they talked about the way the school could look when it was fixed up. They talked about how nice it would be to have a gymnasium and ample playground space for the students. They talked about how much easier it would be to unload the buses on the school's quiet residential street. They made two lists. The first priority list included fix the roof, get the ventilation system working, connect the fire alarm. The second priority list included new shades, repair for the phone system, and planning the move.

The week before school opened in the Fall the researcher arranged to meet Harris at the Waverly site. The change in the building was remarkable. There were new shades at the windows. It was freshly painted. The classrooms, including the library were already set up. In each room there were new displays on the bulletin boards, books were neatly arranged on shelves and materials were placed in cabinets. A teacher explained that she had been working for the past week to get her room ready. The school was aglow with enthusiasm and excitement.

"Well, how did you do it?" the researcher inquired when Harris appeared in the hallway. Harris explained that three weeks before school was to start the religious group was still in the building. One week later she managed to get them to start moving, although they were still moving things out of storage areas until a few days ago. Several CETA workers were assigned to clean and prepare the building, but none of them had any experience with heavy cleaning or painting. It was clear that the building would never be ready for the start of school.

Harris began to do a lot of "kicking and screaming" to get things going. She telephoned the teachers and invited them to come on a "voluntary basis" to get their rooms ready. She explained that it would be in their own interest to "preserve their own sanity" so that they would have things ready when the children arrived. Though the teachers received "no pay, of course," they were all eager to come to school and set things up.

To get the building clean Harris spoke daily to the district superintendent and the district maintenance head. At first she was getting nowhere. Finally she told the maintenance head, "You know, just wait until September. Wait until the parents see the condition of this wonderful magnet academy, this showcase school. Just wait until they see the precious option that the Superintendent is giving to them for their special children. Just wait until they see this dirty school, with raggy shades hanging at the windows, that this wonderful desegregation plan has brought them." At the same time, Harris insisted that the district superintendent help her out. She urged him to visit the school himself and see what the conditions were. He came and was disgusted by the building's appearance. He later told the researcher that it was "so bad, I couldn't believe it." After this point things began to move. A maintenance crew was sent to clean and paint the school. The new shades arrived and were installed. The critical repairs were made.

Example Three: Things may be bad, but we'll still be here tomorrow--Harris examined the staffing formula for primary (grades 1-3) and intermediate (grades 4-6) teaching positions. The regulations were complex, but the outcome was clear. She did not have enough students for an extra intermediate position. When she combined the number of extra students at both levels, however, she did qualify for an extra primary position. The problem was that she needed an intermediate teacher, not a primary teacher. She completed the paperwork which would open the new position but she requested an intermediate teacher. Then she wrote a note that explained this deviation. The note read, in part, "I hereby request an intermediate opening in lieu of a primary opening because I really need an intermediate teacher."

She explained that the position request would be routed from her office through the district office and on to the personnel office downtown. Before it would be forwarded downtown, her district superintendent had to sign and approve the position request. Since she knew that there was an irregularity in the request, she could not send it to the district office without an explanation. Otherwise they would send it back to the school for correction.

After completing the forms and note, Harris telephoned the district office and spoke to the district administrator. Harris began to joke with him. Referring to the growing financial crisis in the school system, she said, "I know that this probably won't go anywhere for a while, but I want to get this off of my desk and on to yours." He listened to her rationale and agreed to go along. He assured her that the request would be forwarded on to the personnel office with the district superintendent's approval.

## 5. Commentary

Although Harris is well aware of the changes that have altered the school system, she is also aware of those aspects of the system that seem to stay the same. One aspect that does not change is the need to get approval for variations in procedure. In fact, knowing how to get others to approve irregularities is an important element of Harris's ability to expand her areas of personal discretion. She expands her options by getting central staff to use their discretion to allow deviations from standard procedure. Furthermore, she accepts their instructions on the right way to successfully alter procedure.

When Harris went ahead and enrolled special education students without Certificates of Eligibility, the downtown office not only approved her plan but instructed her in the wording of a parental waiver that would lend legal protection to the deviation in procedure. When she renewed her request for new faculty at the magnet school, she asked the personnel office for the "easiest, fastest way to get the people I selected." She took their instruction, not minding writing yet another letter. Harris is expert at prevailing upon the discretionary powers of others to shape procedures to the specific needs of her schools.

These examples also provide some hint as to how she manages to win the cooperation of central staff. She is persistent. She carries a situation through regular channels until a request for variance is appropriate. She often indicates that meeting her request will help her benefactors improve their own position. The district maintenance head would look better in the eyes of parents, for example, if the magnet schools were clean and repaired. The teachers would preserve their own "sanity" if they prepare their classrooms before the children arrive. The downtown special education staff would look better when inquiries are made about a case if they have looked it up and can speak about it in an informed way.

Taking the time to complete the forms for a position opening that is irregular when teachers are being cut to save money and the system is in financial chaos may seem out of touch. But Harris is not out of touch. She acknowledges the present crisis when she tells the assistant district superintendent that it "probably won't go anywhere for a while." Still, she will get it to him and get his approval of the irregularity it contains. In the future it may be approved. In the meantime she has nothing to lose by carrying on and getting her moves into position. When things improve and a new direction is set, some of her requests just may be granted. It's worth a try.

# CHAPTER VIII

# PRINCIPALING AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE PRINCIPAL

## VIII-A. SHAPING THE JOB TO SUIT:
### Maximizing Job Satisfaction By Design

## 1. Introduction

There are widely accepted normative viewpoints regarding the proper role of the school principal. First, there is general agreement that a top priority, and the major focus of time usage, should be the provision of instructional leadership; the improvement of learning is regarded as the major task of the principalship (Roe and Drake, 1980).[1] Additional responsibilities of importance include attention to program and facility/resource planning, community relations, student services, and school site management (Tipham and Hoeh, Jr., 1974[2];Hughes and Ubben, 1978[3]).

Second, there is a widely accepted viewpoint that the building principal's role in practice is "all too often defined by people outside the principal's office" (Pharis and Zakariya, 1979).[4] The control that building administrators have over their own work-a-day lives has suffered considerably from the impact of state and federal regulations, of increasing central office control, of growing legalism, and of a much intensified political environment that now surrounds the principalship (King, 1980[5];Hill et al., 1980[6]).

There is, third, the view that the set of role expectations surrounding the principalship exceed by far the practical resources of time and capacity that are available to most individuals. In order to oversee effectively the learning process, to be fully engaged in school-community relations, to manage the flood of paper work, to guide staff development and improvement, to meet student needs, to oversee the financial and physical resources of the school, to plan and innovate as well as handle the crises and unusual occurrences of each day, the building principal requires (if fully attentive to each area of expectation) a pace of activity and involvement that surpasses good personal health (Rogers, 1980).[7]

Each of these views of the principal's job portrays well the source of some of t[illegible]ilemmas and tensions surrounding the principalship. However, we find that like other workers, principals hold attitudes toward their own role; they like some parts of the job and dislike other parts, and they shape the job to suit their own interests and inclinations. Most principals will spend time doing that which they most enjoy, think they are good at, or believe will most likely "make a difference." Other aspects of the job or of the expected and normative role are not much emphasized.

## 2. Redefining the Supervisory Role

The principals in our study spent, on the average, 7 to 9 percent of their time observing teachers. Most take very seriously their responsibility for the evaluation of teachers and the improvement of instruction, and many express some guilt and frustration about the lack of time given to teacher supervision. However, a common feeling is that long hours in classrooms have little payoff and draw attention away from the many pressing demands of each working day. Rather than sit and observe for any appreciable length of time, a frequent mode of supervisory behavior is to "spot check" teaching activity in the school while engaged in daily patrols of the school's corridors. An example drawn from the observational log of High School Principal Dan Rutledge shows, below, that teacher observation is often well integrated into the daily routine of overall school control and organizational maintenance.

7:55 a.m.--Rutledge finishes a cup of coffee and starts to leave the office for a walk through the hallways.

7:56 --In the outer office, Rutledge glances through a sheet showing the attendance records of the school's teachers for the year thus far.

7:58 --Two teachers approach, one after the other, both asking brief questions about the scheduling of school events.

8:01 --A male student approaches Rutledge, asks to speak with him, and mentions that he's having trouble getting along with one of his teachers. Rutledge admonishes the student to improve his attendance, to buckle down, and to make the most of the situation.

8:05 --Rutledge enters the first floor hall, says hello to students as he walks, stops one student to ask for a pass, stoops to pick up some paper scattered along a portion of the corridor.

8:08 --Rutledge spots five students moving together down the hall and asks them where they're going. They explain they're on an errand to help set up the gymnasium for a special program ("Festival") later that day.

8:10 --Rutledge enters the gym and looks over the preparations made so far for the Festival.

8:13 --Rutledge moves again through the halls, looking into classrooms in session through the window in each door, stopping (8:17) in one class to observe a teacher giving a geography lesson.

8:20 --Rutledge enters a departmental office to confer with a teacher heading a committee that's preparing for an upcoming North Central Association visit.

8:24 --Rutledge moves again into the gymnasium balcony overlooking preparations for the Festival. A student approaches and informs him that a shop teacher is absent today.

8:26 --Rutledge enters a music room, observes for a few minutes, nods to the teacher and leaves.

8:29 --Rutledge re-enters the school office and gives some instructions to his secretary, then begins some desk work in his inner office.

8:41 --Rutledge returns to the hallway and is stopped by a teacher who tells him about a problem student.

8:45 --A cafeteria worker stops Rutledge and asks a question. While talking, Rutledge sees a student wearing his hat and asks him to take it off.

8:47 --A student approaches Rutledge to ask about his reward for winning a poster contest.

8:50 --Rutledge re-enters his own office, makes a phone call to the school engineer, talks briefly with a student who pokes her head in his door, receives a teacher who informs him she'll soon be taking a maternity leave, and places a brief call to the district administrative office.

9:06 --Rutledge walks again out to the hallway and up to the third floor, entering a biology classroom to observe.

9:11 --Rutledge returns downstairs to the school office and confers with an assistant principal regarding an upcoming teacher institute.

A major constraint in fulfilling the supervisory role is the elaborate and legally inflexible set of procedures that surround teacher dismissal. A series of written indications of unsatisfactory performance and a series of classroom observations by both the principal and higher-level administrators must be instituted within very rigid limitations of time and protocol/procedure. At any point in a long process of competency review a case may be, and very frequently is, "tossed out" on a legal technicality (e.g., a final notice of unsatisfactory performance wasn't handed the teacher on exactly the fifty-first working day following a first notice.)

Although some principals give considerable attention to the very time consuming and delicate process of weeding out their poorer faculty, and most principals have an occasional dismissal case, the more common behavior is to concentrate on other routes to staff improvement. Anne Johnson, Principal of the Mayfair School, reports that she has given a first notice to one of her teachers but has decided to drop the termination process for this year, giving the teacher more time to improve. Johnson says that she "really would rather work on changing people who show potential but are not producing, rather than hanging people." George Alfero, another principal, complains that he already has one teacher who was formally terminated last year but has been in her classroom throughout this year, hanging on through a technicality. Alfero says this happens lots of times. People are dismissed but just keep teaching; and as they keep their jobs other people realize that all of this supervision and these ratings are meaningless. Alfero says: "I get very weary trying to keep the pressure up, especially when there don't seem to be any teeth in what I'm doing."

3. Getting Things Done--One alternative to a close attention to teacher observation, evaluation, and dismissal is to redirect a good portion of the supervision component of the principalship role into other endeavors that relate in some way to the supervisory role expectation but appear to have a better chance for some payoff. Principals concentrate on activities that have an "end product" of some sort, that give evidence of accomplishment.

Some principals give much time to curriculum improvement--in the form of textbook and instructional materials selection or in the form of rearranging the scheduling and flow of learning activities (e.g., inaugurating a "walking reading" or "walking math" program). Some principals take a special interest in pupil testing and evaluation; others spend a good deal of their own time tutoring underachieving pupils, and still others will become heavily involved in the kind of program development that offers the hope of bringing new, outside resources to the school (e.g., a new program for the gifted, a cooperative vocational education venture). Many principals take a special interest in the bulletin board activity of the school--urging the display of student work throughout the school, and often "plastering" the school with learning-related slogans and sayings. Teachers rise or fall in favor with their principal at least in part according to the conscientiousness of their attention to bulletin boards and student exhibits. Nearly every principal redirects the observation and evaluation of instruction into a "checking up" on staff activities that have an objective and "measurable" side, thus making sure, for example, that teachers are on duty at the correct time and place, checking on the preparation of weekly lesson plans, watching over attendance records.

4. Building Staff Cooperation--A second alternative to direct supervision is to spend time building staff morale and cooperation. Without resort to evaluation procedures with "teeth," principals will give time to the development of their within-the-school authority by satisfying staff welfare and resource needs.

Although their styles and their degrees of "openness" vary, both elementary and secondary principals commonly balance their supervisory (spot check) activity by spending a good deal of time attending to the individual and professional concerns of their school staff members. Nearly every principal positions himself at the front desk each day as teachers are signing in or signing out. Pleasantries are exchanged, messages are communicated, questions about schedules or procedures are asked and answered, concerns about friends or loved ones are expressed, some bantering and joking occurs, a few rumors are passed on. Nearly every tour of the halls by the principal results in at least a couple of exchanges with staff members, wherein the principal receives a request for assistance in some form or is reporting back after having responded to a request.

In addition to their help with "welfare" problems (e.g., payroll, sick leave, etc.), principals also give much of themselves to assisting their staff professionally. A book order is all mixed up and the principal quickly arranges a loan of texts from a nearby school to insure each teacher enough books for all of her pupils. An elementary school receives an unexpected increase in its number of teaching staff, and the principal decides to use the new positions in such a way as to give some of his most heavily burdened teachers a non-teaching ("preparation") period. The school suddenly runs out of ditto-masters, and the principal makes a run on his own to an office store, to purchase an emergency supply. A youngster in Miss Jones' class is oversize for his age, and Principal Smith spends part of one morning locating an appropriate desk and chair for the boy.

Interestingly, the staff assistance provided by the principal, both welfare and professional, can be just as effectively used as punishment rather than reward. With those staff members who don't reciprocate, who don't cooperate fully in meeting the principal's goals, administrative help with personal problems can be nicely withheld.

## 5. Focusing the Principalship Role

Despite the reactive quality of the job (i.e., much of the day is spent in response to the initiatives of others), and despite their very wide arena of managerial responsibility, principals nevertheless focus their activities toward personal/professional objectives. They find the time to emphasize things they are good at and that produce a measure of satisfaction in a role that seldom produces much recognition of a "job well done." Again, in the midst of responsibilities that seldom give hard evidence of success, time is focused on that which leads to an observable end product, a payoff.

Arthur Robinson, for example, spent many hours over the course of two full years striving to obtain the allocation of a new hot lunch facility for the Exeter School. The bureaucratic battle to obtain the facility and to get it installed was a source of much satisfaction to Robinson, who enjoyed telling the story of his effort. Similarly, Susan Collins was able, with hard effort and a good deal of politicizing, to obtain the designation of some vacant land adjacent to the Willow School as natural prairie, to be preserved for environmental education. Other principals focused upon community relations, new program development, principals' professional association involvement, or the school's instructional equipment. Principal Marmor, for example, pointed with great pride to the very extensive layout of computerized and programmed learning equipment that he had obtained over the years for the Oak Lane School.

### 6. Expanding the Role To Meet Responsibilities

Principals also focus and concentrate time upon "gaps" in the organizational or procedural structure of the school system. Some of the most important elements of the institutional environment are not under the direct control of the building principal. In the system under study these elements may include the school janitorial staff; many "traveling" professionals (e.g., social workers, psychologists, some instructional specialists); and persons working in the schools who are paid by other city agencies (e.g., security officers, some community relations workers). One principal personally repaired (sewed up) the curtains in the school auditorium rather than to "hassle" any longer with the appropriate repair personnel. Another spent many hours smoothing conflicts between school faculty and construction workers as the school underwent major remodeling in the midst of the school year.

Principals frequently must negotiate services with individuals or organizations that are needed in the school but are not readily available. One principal established a special relationship with one of the city's major teaching hospitals, and obtained psychological services for his students that, he thought, exceeded the quality and availability of regular school system resources. Another principal negotiated at length with the city park district to repair and improve some playground equipment serving the school but located on park district property. A third attempted "through channels" to bring an unattended, busy intersection to the attention of the police precinct (school crossing guards are paid by the police department) and eventually negotiated the matter on his own using citizenry and local political leadership help.

One important manner in which the principal "fills in gaps" is evident in the time a principal devotes to "exceptional" students, usually either "problem" students or very able students--persons who tend to fall through the cracks in the school production process. Both elementary and high school principals give a substantial portion of their day to student interactions. Many principals eat their lunch in the student cafeteria and otherwise make themselves visible and available at passing periods. Although styles vary, a number of principals spend many hours in the work week assisting students with special problems. The problems will often involve issues of class scheduling, of teachers' grading policies, of needed graduation credit; but the students' problems are just as likely to involve very personal matters of home environment, peer relations, psychological tension, or school-related stress. Returned runaways, drug or alcohol users, students with poor attendance habits, pupils with estranged parents--all become the personal consideration of the principal, particularly if the individuals involved can be considered "nice" kids who simply need a bit of help. Similarly, exceptionally able students will also receive the principal's personal attention--with special awards and recognition ceremonies (e.g., a "coffee" with the principal), with the arrangement of added educational opportunities (e.g., a special poetry reading group meeting weekly with the principal), and with additional individual guidance from and conversations with the principal(e.g., about college plans). It would appear that the principal seeks to make sure that each "tail" (both problem and exceptional ends) of the normal distribution of pupils is not allowed to slip beyond the boundaries of his school's influence.

## 7. Summary

Despite the commonalities of principalship responsibility, the largely reactive nature of much of the working day, and the well understood normative sense of what principaling should be all about, we find that principals do as individuals shape their jobs to suit. Principals especially enjoy working on problems which they know in advance can be solved, that have an "end product" of some sort. If principals cannot fully program their own success, they can at least program some of their own job satisfaction, which is perhaps the next best thing.

## Footnotes

[1] Roe, W.H. and Drake, T.L. The Principalship, 2nd Edition (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980).

[2] Tipham, J.M. and Hoeh, J.A., Jr., The Principalship: Foundations and Functions (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

[3] Hughes, I.W. and Ubben, G.C. The Elementary Principal's Handbook (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1978).

[4] Pharis, W.L. and Zakariya, S.B. The Elementary School Principalship in 1978: A Research Study (Arlington, Va.: National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1979).

[5] King, R.A. "The Principal and the Law," Administrator's Notebook, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1979-80): 1-4.

[6] Hill, P., Wuchitech, J.,and Williams, R., "The Effects of Federal Education Programs on School Principals," A Rand Note Prepared for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, February, 1980).

[7] Rogers, K.S. "Principals Discuss Their Roles: An Observational Study," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Boston, April, 1980.

# PART FOUR

# BEHAVIOR AND INFORMATION

# CHAPTER IX

# PRINCIPALS AND BUSINESSMEN

## How They Manage

### A. INTRODUCTION

The Harvard Business Review routinely publishes articles on management theory and administrative practices. In 1974, the editors of the Review received a manuscript from Professor Henry Mintzberg of McGill University detailing some findings of an unusual study of chief executives of large organizations. Unlike previous investigators using questionnaires, diaries, activity sampling and other indirect modes of investigation, Prof. Mintzberg had decided to go directly to the source, that is, to study management by personally accompanying organization executives as they go about their daily work. Spending a week with each of five chief executives,[1] he recorded minute by minute how they spend their time, who they talk with, what they talk about, and where these conversations take place.

The article was published under the title, "The Manager's Job: Folklore and Fact" in the July-August 1975 issue of the Review and immediately stirred up provocative comment in the management community. Its approach was so unorthodox and its results so revealing, that the article was awarded the coveted McKinsey prize for the best article in the Review in 1975.

The publication of the article served to attract widespread interest in the basic work from which much of its material was drawn, namely, The Nature of Managerial Work, published by Harper and Row in 1973. In this volume, Professor Mintzberg provided not only a detailed presentation of the overall findings of his study of chief executives but also a comprehensive review of previous research strategies in this field. It goes without saying that he believes his approach an unarguable improvement over the earlier conventional research procedures. As he put it:

> A review of the literature undertaken before designing my study revealed a lack of descriptive material on the content of managerial work. In simple terms, there was little to tell us what managers actually do.[2]

Because Mintzberg's book provided such a direct glimpse of the manager at work, and because it extrapolated these data into a comprehensive theory, it has been widely read and has won general recognition as a definitive work on management theory. It is not too much to say that the volume now serves as a guidepost for investigations into administrative practice in many organizational settings.

The present study on school principals was inspired, in part, by Mintzberg's approach to the study of managerial activity. In the development of our research design, we wanted to examine the behavior of school principals in a manner that would make possible an analysis of their daily activity in light of the Mintzberg categories. The present chapter is such an analysis.

## B. COMPARATIVE WORKLOAD ANALYSIS

### 1. The Mail

Prior to the onset of his five-day observation of each executive, Mintzberg conducted a detailed analysis of the incoming and outgoing mail of his subject. He determined that the average amount of mail processed per day came to 36 pieces and that the reading and answering of this mail consumed 22 percent of the executives' time. In contrast, we have learned that school principals conduct their managerial work almost totally through oral communication and coordinately spend much less of their work day reading, digesting or answering mail. Typically, on an average day, the elementary school principal receives fewer than five incoming formal documents requiring systematic attention and forwards to outside parties only one to three written communications. The study of incoming documents and the drafting of outgoing memoranda and letters consumes less than 12 percent of this principal's time. In like fashion, the secondary principal receives fewer than ten incoming documents and generates four to seven such documents on an average day. (Long-hand notes to teachers or pupil-hand-carried notes to parents, of which there may be several during the day, are not included in these totals.) On the whole, secondary principals devote only 7 percent of their managerial time to paperwork of this sort.

It must be kept in mind that the *chief* executives studied by Mintzberg have far more occasion to communicate in writing, especially to outside parties, than do *middle* managers working within a routinized hierarchy. Nevertheless, we were surprised at how infrequently school principals turned to the written word either for incoming or outgoing information. They seemed uneasy with print, and found the drafting of memos, letters or reports an unwelcome chore. As a group, school principals are comfortably at home primarily with the spoken word.

### 2. The Telephone

The Mintzberg five may have spent a fifth of their time on paper work at the desk, but it was learned that they spent only 6 percent of their time on the telephone. Taken by itself, this figure may come as something of a surprise to the layman who has acquired a picture of the executive officer as partly a creature *of* the telephone and expected therefore to work through this instrument a good part of the day. Such, however, appears not to be the case.

Equally with school principals, the telephone is a relatively unobtrusive feature of their lives. We have discovered that only 7 percent of the typical work day of both elementary and secondary principals is taken up with communications on this medium of contact.

## 3. Scheduled meetings

From Mintzberg's data, it appears that the scheduled encounter with associates is the primary medium of managerial action among businessmen. In the course of 202 hours of observation of five executives over 25 work days, Mintzberg counted 105 meetings averaging 68 minutes in length. In all, the executives spent almost 60 percent of their time in such meetings. School principals do sometimes schedule some of their contact with their associates, but these premeditated encounters are of much shorter duration (averaging less than 30 minutes), and count for a much smaller percentage of principaling time (about 3 percent). The only general exception to this is the amount of time spent in meetings called by the superior, the district superintendent. Typically these meetings occur once a month and generally last all morning and through the lunch hour, a span of three to four hours.

## 4. Unscheduled meetings

It is in the area of the unscheduled meeting that the difference between business executives and school principals becomes more pronounced. The businessmen had 101 unscheduled encounters during the 202 hours, with an average duration of 12 minutes per meeting. However, they spent only ten percent of their total work time in these unplanned encounters.

For school principals, almost the opposite is true. Cruising the corridors, as we shall see in the next section, is one of the principal's habitual, recurring managerial activities. At the high school level, these tours, not surprisingly, are peppered with short interchanges between principal and faculty or principal and student. Even when sitting in the office, the principal is frequently interrupted by staff colleagues, by office clerks, or by a wandering student or a teacher with a question. We clocked over ninety such spontaneous encounters in a typical work day, with an average duration of less than three minutes. The high school principal characteristically spends 76 percent of his or her time in these unscheduled interchanges.

At the elementary school level, the hall tour is more typically a solo voyage through relatively empty passageways, except when classes are convening, changing, or letting out. Nevertheless, the principal seeks out teachers and particular pupils for short conversations, and on the average records up to seventy or eighty such contacts during the regular work day, with an average duration of under three minutes.

The elementary principal devotes 65 percent of the managerial day to these encounters.

## 5. The Tour

Mintzberg made a point of logging the minutes spent in walking tours of the businessman's environment and learned that in the business world this does not seem to be a very prevalent managerial strategem. The tours were few in number, lasted only an average of eleven minutes and accounted for only three percent of the chief executive's work day.

In contrast, the school principal is seemingly in constant motion, a paripatetic scavenger of information, visual impressions, and general feel of the institution over which he or she presides. We found that cruising the hallways is a common, almost necessary feature of principaling work. The day begins with a general tour of the building, and ends with a similar checking out of the physical facilities--to close doors, put out lights, and check for the condition of the furniture and equipment. Over and above these two general tours, the remainder of the day is interspersed with unannounced cruises throughout the school building; it is the principal's way of "showing the flag" of authority--a mild form of intimidation--to both students and teachers. In our observation of principals, we found that a typical school day includes seven to ten of these sojourns through the corridors, with attendant stopovers in classrooms, gymnasiums, staff offices, and--a general favorite--the lunchroom. The principal, both elementary and secondary, is physically in the hallways about ten percent of the work day with another 15 to 20 percent of managerial time devoted to stopover visits in the above mentioned areas.

In this connection and with regard also to the previous section on unscheduled meetings, it is important to keep in mind that unlike other kinds of managers in businesses, in government agencies, in the military, and even in hospitals, the school principal governs not one but two constituencies--teachers and students. These groups both inhabit the institution over which the principal presides, but they are distinct constituencies with sharply differentiated psychological and intellectual needs. The principal uses the unscheduled meeting, the spur-of-the-moment encounter, and especially the corridor cruise as a way of opening himself or herself to these two constituencies; in this way, the principal in effect carries the office of the middle manager out into the field where it is more accessible than when physically tucked away into a four-walled office.

In the setting of a business establishment or government bureau, the corporate boss or agency chief actually cultivates the sense of eminence and distance by physically staying away from "the troops," transacting most of his or her business in the private office or an adjoining conference room. Even a hospital director, presumably with two constituencies, nevertheless carries on the managerial function in the relative privacy of the administrative suite, having very little contact with the patient in the ward.

All of this suggests that the school is basically unlike other organizations in two fundamental ways: First, it is the host for two relatively distinct sub-populations co-existing within it in a state of uneasy harmony. Managerial adroitness must be developed for the administration of each of these sub-populations and for the control of the relationship that prevails between them. Second, and perhaps more decisive, the school's ambiance vibrates to an unsophisticated social perspective, i.e., that of the young. Although the principal deals with adults (teachers, staff, clerks, janitors), the principal's primary client is the student. The student and his world command the foreground of attention. Thus, the school as an organization, even though operated by adults, conducts its business in resonance with the immaturity, naivete and easy intimidability of young people. It is for this reason that the school principal is obligated to manage in a more open, more casual, literally more visible fashion. Accordingly most principals are gregarious, sociable, voluble people for whom the face-to-face encounter is the only one that counts.

## C. THE MINTZBERG THEORY

As noted earlier, Professor Mintzberg went beyond the time-motion dimension of managerial activity to set forth a more general theory of managerial work. It is Mintzberg's thesis that managerial behavior can be classified into ten working roles, and that "these ten roles are common to the work of all managers."[3] The ten roles are clustered in three generic spheres of activity and can be summarized as follows:

Interpersonal
- Figurehead
- Leader
- Liaison

Informational
- Monitor
- Disseminator
- Spokesman

Decisional
- Entrepreneur
- Disturbance handler
- Resource allocator
- Negotiator

Because these categories represent the yield from rather than the a priori frame work for his research design, Mintzberg did not provide a time breakdown of his executives' work day in terms of these classifications. Indeed, in the hectic course of a manager's day, it may be difficult to ascertain when one role ends and another begins.

Nevertheless, in our study of principals, we wanted to find out how useful this taxonomy would be in understanding the work of the educational middle manager. Accordingly we decided to force the data into these rubrics in order to determine if a role-distribution picture of principaling could be drawn. Our first task, of course, was to convert the ten categories into educational terminology, and then to develop analogous behaviors of school principals which would illustrate prototypical performance in each role. Pursuant to this objective, we developed the following scheme as a frame for this sector of our investigation:

## THE MINTZBERG CATEGORIES[4]

### Their application to educational organizations

### INTERPERSONAL

#### FIGUREHEAD

Mintzberg Description: "Symbolic head; obliged to perform a number of duties of a legal or social nature. Identifiable Activities: ceremony, status requests, solicitations."

Educational Illustrations: Principal...
Makes welcoming speech at assembly.
Socializes with students.
Receives potential benefactor who wants to give $10,000 to school for band uniforms.
Serves as master of ceremonies at assembly when check is handed to school. Principal symbolically receives check for school.
Handles request from neighborhood group for donation of time or money from school to help clean up neighborhood.
Signs graduation diplomas, plaques, ceremonial documents,etc.

KEY IDEA: Ceremonial or social activities in which the principal serves as the symbol of the school.

#### LEADER

Mintzberg Description: "Responsible for the motivation and activation of subordinates; responsible for staffing, training, and associated duties. Identifiable Activities: Virtually all managerial activities involving subordinates."

Educational Illustrations: Principal...
Interviews and recommends assignment of prospective teacher.
Sits in class observing and evaluating a teacher.
Recommends salary increments.
Explains rules of school to teacher.

Criticizes or commends teacher's work.
Directs subordinates, giving instructions.
Holds in-service training workshop for teachers or clerks.
Promotes, demotes, or dismisses a subordinate.
Socializes with faculty and staff (giving clues of approval of disapproval).

KEY IDEA: Whenever the principal is directing, instructing, supervising or evaluating (commending or criticizing) a subordinate, the leader activity is going on.

## LIAISON

Mintzberg Description: "Maintains self-developed network of outside contacts and informers who provide favors and information. Identifiable Activities: Acknowledgements of [external] mail, external board work, other activities involving outsiders."

Educational Illustrations: Principal...
Cultivates friends and informers in Board of Ed Headquarters offices or area businesses or city government.
Compares notes with other school principals.
Befriends operators of nearby restaurants and eateries to augment "eyes and ears" network of informants.
Works with police department in neighborhood.
Cultivates alderman of ward where school is located.
Works with Operation PUSH.
Works with local churches or social agencies.

KEY IDEA: Principal collaborates with organizations and individuals outside the school, including fellow principals, to enhance work of the school.

## INFORMATIONAL

## MONITOR

Mintzberg Description: "Seeks and receives wide variety of special information (much of it current) to develop thorough understanding of organization and environment; emerges as nerve center of internal and external information of the organization. Identifiable Activities: Handling all [intra-organization] mail and contracts categorized as concerned primarily with receiving information (e.g., periodical news, observational tours)."

Educational Illustrations: Principal...
Receives info through mail or telephone.
Cruises hallways to keep in touch with what's going on.
Gets briefing from APs or otners in school on what is going on.
Asks for regular reports from dept. heads, teachers, or APs.
Reads routine reports from higher offices.
Gets info from parents, police, local newspapers on how his/her students are behaving.
Picks up rumors from students.

KEY IDEA: Principal obtains knowledge about school which does not require action but is informational in character. Knowledge is gained through spoken or written work, or by observation.

## DISSEMINATOR

Mintzberg Description: "Transmits information received from outsiders or from other subordinates to members of the organization; some information factual, some involving interpretation and integration of diverse value positions of organizational influencers. Identifiable Activities: Forwarding mail into organization for informational purposes, verbal contacts involving information flow to subordinates (e.g., review sessions, instant communication flows)."

Educational Illustrations: Principal...
Routes mail to teachers and staff.
Attaches notes to bulletins and reports and forwards to staff.
Calls subordinates on phone to relay info.
Relays info to APs, teachers or clerical staff in offices or hallways.

KEY IDEA: Passing on info orally or in writing to others inside the school.

## SPOKESMAN

Mintzberg Description: "Transmits information to outsiders on organization's plans, policies, actions, results, etc.; serves as expert on organization's industry. Identifiable Activities: Board meetings, handling mail and contacts involving transmission of information to outsiders."

Educational Illustrations: Principal...
Files personnel report with DS.
Explains school's bilingual program to Aspira.
Explains school's Access to Excellence program to Operation PUSH.

Gives invited talk at Kiwanis/Rotary luncheon to describe vocational preparation curriculum.
Gives info to a newspaper reporter.
Provides info to police on school incident.

KEY IDEA: When Principal is giving information about the school to people outside the school, including hierarchy superiors, he/she is serving as spokesman.

## DECISIONAL

### ENTREPRENEUR

Mintzberg Description: "Searches organization and its environment for opportunities and initiates 'improvement projects' to bring about change; supervises design of certain projects as well. Identifiable Activities: Strategy and review sessions involving initiation or design of improvement projects."

Educational Illustrations: Principal...
Convenes ad hoc faculty committee to develop new program.
Appoints a teacher to draft a new student handbook with never-before codified rules of conduct.
Creates a new duty for one of his/her APs and provides small budget to get the job done.
Convenes businessmen in neighborhood to help develop vocational program.

KEY IDEA: Developing new courses, new programs, new expectations in school community among participants.

### DISTURBANCE HANDLER

Mintzberg Description: "Responsible for corrective action when organization faces important, unexpected disturbances. Identifiable Activities: Strategy and review sessions involving disturbances and crises."

Educational Illustrations: Principal...
Settles fights between students.
Adjudicates dispute between teachers.
Mobilizes treatment and hospitalization of injured person, apprehension of assailant, and fact-finding to get the full story from witnesses after a stabbing in the school.
Counsels teacher and relieves her after she refuses to assume hall guard duty because she claims she was orally mistreated by students on previous day.
Disburses crowd of students in the hallway trying to buy class rings. Establishes orderly procedure for ring sales.

KEY IDEA: Principal handles misconduct, controls environment so that disturbance is held to minimum and routine of school can continue.

## RESOURCE ALLOCATOR

Mintzberg Description: "Responsible for the allocation of organizational resources of all kinds--in effect the making or approval of all significant organizational decisions. Identifiable Activities: Scheduling requests for authorization, any activity involving budgeting and the programing of subordinates' work."

Educational Illustrations: Principal...
- Oversees class schedule.
- Deploys staff to different duties.
- Oversees covering of classes by subs, staff, or self.
- Works on budget.
- Instructs hall guard to change stations and cover another door.
- Delegates an _ad hoc_ task to a subordinate (e.g., handling a parent complaint).

KEY IDEA: Any activity of assigning personnel, allocating dollars, assigning equipment or material is resource allocation.

## NEGOTIATOR

Mintzberg Description: "Responsible for representing the organization at major negotiations. Identifiable Activities: Negotiation."

Educational Illustrations:
- Negotiates school rules with Professional Problems (Union) Committee.
- Participates in Union contract negotiations with central office staff.
- Negotiates with police department on precise duties of officer stationed inside the school building.
- Works out deal with local snack shop manager to prohibit drug use on his premises.
- Bargains with District Supt. on _quid pro quo_ favors in return for budget cuts.

KEY IDEA: Negotiation with any "outside" group on behalf of the school.

In working through our data using the above ten rubrics, we came across some behavior of principals which did not seem to fall into any of the ten, namely, those occasions on which the principal is being given orders, instructions, or directives by his or her superior. This might be expanded to include the times, admittedly rare, when the superior--in the Chicago case, the district superintendent--is evaluating the principal's performance. That is to say, sometimes the district superintendent is engaging in what Mintzberg would classify as Leader behavior--directing, instructing, supervising or judging a subordinate (the principal). On these occasions, what is the principal doing?

The failure of the list of ten roles to include this behavior is perhaps explained by the fact that Mintzberg's subjects were all chief executives who typically report to a board of directors or similar body. Although Mintzberg found that these chief executives spent seven percent of their time with their directors, he did not explicate the significance of this behavior in the managerial spectrum of activities, and it goes unmentioned in his detailed explanation of each role.

In order to accommodate our data to this lacuna in the taxonomy, we decided to create an eleventh category designated by the rubric, "Subordinate Behavior." Into this basket we placed all behaviors of the principal during episodes in which the district superintendent was playing the Leader role toward the principal--directing, instructing, supervising, or evaluating the principal.

## 1. Elementary Principals

Using the foregoing schema, we tabulated the principal's work schedule for each school. A summation of observations in our elementary schools is provided in Table I.

We can discern from this tabulation that interpersonal role behavior is prominent in the principal's work life, comprising almost a third of the managerial work day. The predominant activity of the school manager, however, turns out to be serving as a clearing house of information--receiving, digesting, interpreting, and then disseminating bits of knowledge concerning the ongoing business of the mini-community inside the school building (Monitor, Disseminator, Spokesman). Over half of the work day, 56 percent, is devoted to this information-handling function. In contrast, the decisional features of the principal's life, at least per Mintzberg, are remarkably limited, this type of behavior comprising only 11 percent of the managerial work day.

As noted in Table I, our eleventh category turned out to be more illuminating for what it did not reveal than for what it did, namely, that the elementary school principal plays out subordinate behavior only one percent of the time while principaling.

## 2. Secondary Principals

Table II shows analogous role behavior among secondary school

## TABLE I

## Performance of Roles: Elementary Principals

(63 days or part-days of observation)

| | Role | Minutes | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Inter-personal | Figurehead | 625 | 4 |
| | Leader | 3353 | 22 |
| | Liaison | 873 | 6 |
| Informa-tional | Monitor | 5323 | 35 |
| | Disseminator | 979 | 6 |
| | Spokesman | 2339 | 15 |
| Decisional | Entrepreneur | 17 | 1 |
| | Disturbance handler | 910 | 6 |
| | Resource allocator | 650 | 4 |
| | Negotiator | 0 | 0 |
| | (Subordinate behavior) | 126 | 1 |
| | | 15,195 | 100 |

## TABLE II

### Performance of Roles: Secondary Principals

(55 days or part-days of observation)

| | Role | Minutes | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Inter-personal | Figurehead | 649 | 4 |
| | Leader | 4304 | 31 |
| | Liaison | 944 | 7 |
| Informa-tional | Monitor | 3644 | 26 |
| | Disseminator | 1235 | 9 |
| | Spokesman | 2276 | 16 |
| Decisional | Entrepreneur | 0 | 0 |
| | Disturbance handler | 529 | 4 |
| | Resource allocator | 274 | 2 |
| | Negotiator | 0 | 0 |
| | (Subordinate behavior) | 188 | 1 |
| | | 14,043 | 100 |

principals. From these figures we can see that at the secondary level, the categories under the "Interpersonal" behaviors constitute somewhat higher figures than at the elementary level, 42 percent of the principal's work day being devoted to these activities. Coordinately, the secondary principal's function as an information processor is slightly less pronounced, with 51 percent of principaling time committed to these activities. Finally, the secondary school principal appears to be engaged in decisional activities only half as often as the elementary principal; only six percent of the high school principal's work day is devoted to these activities.

Here again, the subordinate behavior of the secondary school principal is conspicuous by its infrequency with only one percent of principaling time being devoted to this type of activity. Although both elementary and secondary school principals find themselves following organizational rules and regulations (most of which are promulgated by their superiors), it is rare for a principal at either level to be directly instructed to do something or to refrain from doing something by echelons above him. We have noted elsewhere in this report that site-level school administrators have more leeway and freedom of action than is generally supposed. The stark infrequency of receiving orders or evaluations from those above them, as shown in these tables, provides further support for this generalization.

## 3. The Mintzberg Categories and the School Manager

In superimposing the Mintzberg rubrics onto school situations, it is understandable that the transfer may not be altogether compatible with what we already know about educational administration. For one thing, the term "Interpersonal" as a generic rubric may be misleading in looking at the principal's work. We have noted above that school principals are typically gregarious, sociable people and that they manage in a spoken-word, person-to-person style. One might gather from this characterization that virtually the entire day of a principal is interpersonal in character; and indeed it is, so far as we understand the dynamics of school life. Why, then, is only 30 to 40 percent of a principal's behavior described as "interpersonal" in the Mintzberg formulation?

We believe that the answer may lie in the fact that in cataloging the roles of chief executive officers, Professor Mintzberg was searching for a term which would draw attention to the manager as a personal presence in contrast to the notion of a manager as an information bin or answer box. In a direct communication from Professor Mintzberg regarding this, he makes a distinction, for example, between Resource Allocator and Leader, saying that the latter is "more concerned with the affective side." This suggests that the "Interpersonal" zones of management, as he sees them, are person-oriented whereas "Informational" and "Decisional" activities are more ex officio, more depersonalized, more strictly organizational and structural in character.

In reviewing our findings, we are not altogether sure that such a distinction would fully hold in school situations. So much of a principal's conduct in the act of managing a school community is personal--not only in the one-on-one, face-to-face sense but also in the textural sense, namely, that the end result (the product) of an administrative act as well as its mode of conveyance (the process) is personal in content. An educational institution is essentially people interacting. There may be books, paper and pencils, bell schedules, hierarchical structure in the bureaucracy, and other trappings of non-personal apparatus. But in a school setting, these count for very little. Teaching and learning are phenomena of people interacting. So likewise with managerial behavior which oversees these phenomena. A principal's life in the "Informational" and even the "Decisional" realm is "Interpersonal" in the most profound sense.

We have found also that the word Leader causes some trouble. In the management literature, it is a favorite category and indeed is sometimes treated as virtually synonymous with management. As noted, Mintzberg has chosen to separate out Leader behavior from nine other types of managerial conduct. We believe this separation to be analytically sound, and a move in the right direction. However, it is possible that something may have been left behind in the surgery. In trying to get a solid grip on Leader activity, Mintzberg has chosen to restrict it to only certain forms of behavior, namely: motivating, directing, instructing, supervising, training or evaluating subordinates. It is possible that these behaviors do indeed constitute the heart of leadership, as we use this term in institutional life. But in a school setting, it seems unwarranted to exclude other things, e.g., (to use Mintzberg's rubrics) Figurehead ceremonial conduct at school assemblies, Liaison with the police department in curbing drug traffic, Spokesman conduct serving as titular representative of the school at a P.T.A. meeting, or Entrepreneur behavior in obtaining funds for a new curricular program. Are not these, one might ask Professor Mintzberg, prototypical activities of a leader?

It is possible that the word 'Leader' is too broad. Perhaps Mintzberg was trying to find a term which would focus on the command features of management, those behaviors in which the manager is directly orchestrating the behavior of other people on behalf of the organization's larger goals. In a school setting, and perhaps even in a business setting, the word command is perhaps too strong, but it nevertheless provides a more precise target for the kinds of behavior that Mintzberg is apparently thinking of.

Finally, in transposing the Mintzberg schema to educational settings, we are uncomfortable with the restrictive use of the term Decisional. As noted, our elementary and secondary principals found themselves in this mode only six to eleven percent of the time. How can this be? Is a middle manager, unlike Mintzberg's chief executive officers, not in the business of making decisions? Barring this explanation, what else happened when we carried the Mintzberg rubrics from the executive suite in the business setting to the paripatetic middle manager in the urban school system?

The answer is not clear. It is difficult to imagine a school principal (or any middle manager, for that matter) to be as free of decision-making as these data would suggest. Indeed, the very focus of the present study is discretionary decision-making in the principal's chair, and our findings bear out our assumption that decision-making is a constant, continual activity of the school-site manager.

Here again, the term 'decisional' in Mintzberg's lexicon may have been chosen to carry only a limited, restricted sense, namely, those behaviors which exhibit a dramatic visibility, for example, developing a new product (Entrepreneur), settling a grievance (Disturbance Handler), drawing up the organization's budget (Resource Allocator), or heading off a crippling strike (Negotiator). To what extent does a school principal participate in events of this high-voltage character? Well, it is certainly true that the school principal has plenty of disturbances to handle, and at the secondary level with young adults on the loose, this activity will likely increase in the coming years. But the other three areas are only partly germane to the principal's scope of operations; the principal participates only sporadically in situations of such high visibility.

All of this suggests that school principals make decisions in small, unobtrusive ways and that what these multiple, individual acts of management eventually add up to is the ongoing art of principaling a school. We have detailed some of these behaviors in the preceding pages,and, although these acts do not seem to show up on Mintzberg's radar screen, they constitute nonetheless the basic texture of school administration.

## Footnotes

[1] Chief executives of (a) a major consulting firm, (b) a company manufacturing technological products, (c) a large, urban hospital, (d) a company producing consumer goods, and (e) a large suburban school system.

[2] The Nature of Managerial Work, p. 230.

[3] Ibid., p. 55.

[4] Ibid., Chapter 4, "The Manager's Working Roles," pp. 54-99, summarized in table form on pp. 92-93.

# CHAPTER X

# OBTAINING AND USING PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION:

## The Knowledge Producers and School Principaling

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is (1) to examine the extent to which school principals are exposed to, and aware of, professional information relevant to their jobs and (2) to determine whether such knowledge influences the principal's work. Our research reveals that school principals are exceptionally well informed regarding professional information pertaining to their work. They are not very successful, however, in utilizing this information to achieve the goals of the school nor are they effective in using this knowledge to enhance their performance. This chapter presents evidence from our research to support these two findings. The problem of underutilization of professional information by well-informed principals limits the productivity of schools and has a significant impact on the morale and the professional esteem of middle managers in education. But before the data related to obtaining and using professional information is analyzed, a brief discussion of the concepts of knowledge dissemination and utilization is in order.

Dissemination is defined as the process of "knowledge transfer." The purpose of dissemination is to link decision-makers with information useful to them.[1] In the next section of this chapter, the various means of dissemination used by school principals to obtain professional information will be discussed. Our research focused on how principals obtain information, not on the method of dissemination itself. The researchers recognize that the problem of underutilization of professional information could result from inadequate distribution of information, but this aspect of knowledge transfer was not studied. The study revealed no evidence that dissemination was inadequate and did not suggest that one solution to the problem of underutilization of professional information by principals may be that of improved dissemination procedures. It was assumed that dissemination is adequate and this analysis was carried out using that assumption.

There is, however, a distinct relationship between dissemination of information and the utilization of that information. Dissemination is the first step in the process of helping the decision-maker become aware of new knowledge. In this regard, dissemination, seen as the flow of information, can be thought of as the first step in utilization of new knowledge.

"Utilization" is the other key concept that has particular meaning in this chapter on the use of professional information by principals. In the literature, utilization is defined in numerous ways. Knott and Wildavsky[1] review the wide range of definitions given to this term. They point out that one common view of the term "utilization of information" is that decision-makers utilize information when they read, digest and understand it. That is, becoming cognizant of information is a form of utilization. But practitioners such as principals cannot readily accept this definition of utilization of information. For the purposes of the analysis of our research data, utilization is thought of as an attempt to apply new information to proposed actions. Thus, a change in practice is required for utilization to have taken place.[2] More specifically, in the case of the school principal, utilization of information occurs when there is a change in school procedure, the installation of a new program or a reallocation of professional resources. Later in this chapter it will be shown, using this definition, that there is under-utilization of professional information by the principal.

## 2. Obtaining Professional Information

Our research indicates that school principals are very well informed about professional information related to their jobs. There is evidence that they are generally well aware of recent trends in teaching practice, curriculum, evaluation, financial management, budget-making, personnel practices, staff development, student discipline and similar areas. Furthermore, they become aware of recent trends in numerous ways such as the education literature, professional conferences, and direct observation. In this section, the various means of obtaining professional information are described whereas in the following section the problems associated with utilization of information are discussed. The research shows that principals pride themselves on being educated, knowledgeable professionals. Here are some of the ways in which they obtain knowledge.

a. The Professional Literature--The data from this study indicate that the majority of those principals studied spend at least some time each week reviewing professional journals. Most claimed to subscribe to at least one professional journal or to read those journals available at their school. The level of commitment to reading the literature varied widely. At one extreme were those principals who considered themselves to be "scholars." This was the small group that identified with the "education profession" rather than the day-to-day running of a school. These people were usually part-time lecturers at one of the local colleges or universities in the Chicago area. They seemed to find satisfaction in their association with an institution of higher learning and even seemed to use it as a means of escape from the trials and tribulations of being a principal. The case of Dr. Mildred Gordon is informative regarding this type of principal whom we might call "the scholar."

Dr. Gordon arrived at her inner-city school at 7:30 a.m. each day. For the first hour she was not to be interrupted. She had a very carefully planned study schedule from which she would not be diverted. Dr. Gordon was a very intellectual type. It was clear that she wished she were a professor rather than a principal. Each day she studied either a recent journal such as the Harvard Educational Review or the Educational Administration Quarterly. If she were not reading one of these sophisticated journals, she would be reading the most recent "in" book on the professional education best seller list.

In addition to her duties as a principal, Dr. Gordon taught one course each year in administration at a local university. Her interactions with the researcher, who also was a professor of school administration, were geared toward the professor-professor relationship rather than the principal-researcher relationship. Dr. Gordon was constantly asking the researcher what books he used in class and was always providing names, and even photocopies, of articles that she thought would be helpful to the researcher in his teaching.

Dr. Gordon took advantage of every opportunity to acquire professional literature for herself and for her teachers. Hers was one of the few professional libraries seen by the researchers in an elementary school building. She obtained professional information in the traditional ways such as by journal subscriptions and book purchases, but she also was quite imaginative in her efforts to obtain professional information for herself and the school. One researcher was present when Dr. Gordon was speaking with a representative of a major publishing house who was trying to interest her in some supplementary teaching materials such as film strips. She made a deal with this representative that if he would donate certain classic textbooks published by his house, she would allow him to talk to the teachers about his materials. Dr. Gordon was extreme in her attitude toward being exposed to, and aware of, professional information related to her job. She had recently received her Ph.D. and was hoping to move to university work in the near future.

But Dr. Gordon was not the only principal in our study who had a regular regimen for consulting the literature. Another was Ms. Gilda Hermann who was determined to change the system.

Ms. Hermann read profusely. She was probably one of the most intelligent and best-read individuals ever met by the researcher. She was a dedicated principal of an "academically advanced" school who honestly believed that she could bring about change in the school system, or at least in her own school, by trying to implement some of the latest educational innovations she read in the literature. The results of Ms. Hermann's attempts to innovate will be described in the next section on utilization of professional information.

Ms. Hermann subscribed to numerous journals and professional newsletters in her effort to keep abreast of current trends. She took advantage of every effort at dissemination of information available free of charge. She was so successful at this that she was called by colleagues who were working on research projects for suggestions on how to locate particular documents in the library. In other words she was seen as an expert on the whereabouts of certain professional information. In addition to her other talents, she was also skilled at locating school law cases involving principals. For this reason she served as the "unofficial law librarian" for the local principals' association.

As noted earlier, the cases of Dr. Gordon and Ms. Hermann are extreme cases of familiarity with the literature. Such cases are unusual. Also apparent to the researchers were principals who did little reading of the literature and paid only casual attention to recent professional information. A good example of this type of principal is Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien was an experienced principal. He had served at his present elementary school for eight years and previously at another school for nine years. He was a man who knew every child by name and who knew almost every parent. He spent long hours in the community and had excellent relations with the parents. Mr. O'Brien had not taken a professional class or read professional literature, according to his own admission, in fifteen years. He showed disdain for professional educators and claimed that the only information a principal needs is common sense in dealing with people. It is this knowledge and hard work that leads to success, according to Mr. O'Brien.

Needless to say, between the extremes described above most principals valued the exposure to professional information that they could squeeze into their busy schedules. They did not read much in the way of literature but they did take advantage of conferences and other dissemination efforts made available to them.

b. Professional Conferences--Our research revealed that the professional conference is a very popular way for principals to become aware of professional information. Some conferences are scheduled by the Board of Education and attendance by principals is required. A recent conference of this nature was one called to discuss the implications of PL 94-142. This was a two-day conference to provide principals with the information they need to conduct parent conferences and other matters related to special education children.

Another conference attended by most Chicago principals is the convention of the Chicago Principals Association. This annual two-day event is a highly professional meeting at which a variety of professional matters are addressed by outside speakers from local universities, Board members, school administrators and principals themselves. From the standpoint of obtaining professional information, this conference is critical to the Chicago principals. It is taken seriously and is run as a truly professional meeting. For some principals, it is the only professional meeting they attend during the year.

There are also smaller conferences on specific topics sponsored by the Board for principals during the year. A recent example of this type of meeting was a day-long seminar at the Center for Urban Education for 100 principals dealing with management techniques. Here were tactics--not so much theory--being presented to principals in a workshop format.

In addition to these local conferences and meetings, principals are quite active in various national associations. The Chicago Public Schools usually have good representation at the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the national associations of elementary and secondary school principals, and others such as the American Association of School Administrators (AASA).

c. Direct Observation of Educational Practice--Another means whereby the principal obtains knowledge is through direct observation of certain innovations or practices. In actuality, much learning of this nature takes place through informal networks of fellow principals. Furthermore much of what is observed and called professional information may better be described as recent practices for circumventing the system. Since these practices are described earlier in this report, they will not be dwelt on here. The point of importance for this section is that many principals take part in a network of peers which disseminates the latest information on how to "survive" as a principal. This direct observation through the peer process is of considerable value to the principal in his day-to-day work.

### 3. Using Professional Information

The preceding section has outlined several of the many ways in which principals gain professional knowledge. It is clear that professional information is readily available to the school principal. The use of this information by the principal is another matter. Does this professional information or knowledge influence the principal's work? Knott and Wildavsky observe that there are many factors which determine success other than the availability of information. For example, decision-makers at the middle management level who are responsible for making local decisions are often inhibited from obtaining information by the complexity of their organizational setting. These people are deluged by so much information that professional information is simply lost in their in-baskets. Often when administrators at this level do actually get the informational material, they are too busy to read it. Their frame of reference or psychological state may further prevent these middle management personnel from giving careful consideration to the material they receive.[3]

Even though our research provided many examples of the ways by which principals obtain professional information, there are few direct examples of how this information was utilized. The observations by Knott and Wildavsky about middle managers may provide a partial explanation for the failure of most principals to pursue actively and use professional information. Our research data show that most principals are overwhelmed by the welter of incoming material crossing their desks and needing immediate attention. The demands of the larger organization, the District Office and the school system generally, make it necessary for most of the principals studied in this project to take home each night large amounts of paper work. When asked specifically which journals she read, one principal said "You know, I feel very guilty. I don't really read any journals. By the time I finish all the paper work those no-good-niks create, I just have no more time in the day."

Let us return now to the example of principal Gilda Hermann for it illustrates some of the system-wide problems associated with using professional information. Ms. Hermann, as noted, is the principal of the "academically advanced," special, model school who attempted a program innovation based on professional information she obtained from the literature. Ms. Hermann took her position as principal of this model school in a changing neighborhood with the understanding that she would have a free hand to do program innovations. Since she was interested in social studies she made her first change in the social studies program. It was a change which required some limited in-service training for the teachers selected to be involved. The in-service sessions were conducted by Ms. Hermann herself. The project was begun smoothly; the innovation was made following the in-service training. Ms. Hermann had the cooperation of most of the teachers involved. But there were a very few who would not cooperate for various reasons.

Ms. Hermann felt that she had the support of the District Superintendnet, who appointed her to her position, to "clean house" of those teachers who would not cooperate with the change in the social studies program. With this unwritten understanding, Ms. Hermann evaluated these teachers very low at the end of the year in the hope that they would request a transfer from this model school. But since they had all volunteered and been selected to come to the school, there was a matter of pride involved and they chose to fight Ms. Hermann rather than transfer.

Even though Ms. Hermann had the full support and understanding of the school parent-council, she learned that she did not have the support of the District Superintendent. Ms. Hermann was not told directly, but a decision was made by the District Superintendent to have the teachers in question evaluated by the District social studies coordinator rather than by Ms. Hermann. Pulling the rug out from under the principal in this fashion was done after Ms. Hermann had already notified the teachers involved of their low evaluations. The social studies supervisor rated them much higher than did Ms. Hermann and the situation became intolerable. In fact, the entire program was abandoned at the end of the school year.

There was no question of the authority of the District Superintendent to have the teachers evaluated by the social studies supervisor. But the political maneuvering surrounding the episode made the principal's position untenable. Knott and Wildavsky provide an explanation for such decision making. They observe that possessing good information, such as that which Ms. Hermann used to initiate change in her school, is only one component of the process that leads to effective utilization of professional knowledge. Political power, special skill, and organizational capabilities to act all enter the final outcome.[4] The example of Ms. Hermann and the social studies program innovation illustrates that political power within the Chicago school hierarchy became a force which blocked implementation of a sound idea. In this case information gained from the literature by the principal made a real difference and, in fact, did influence her decision making. Her effort to implement the social studies program innovation was, in effect, an organizational struggle resulting from a change in her thinking brought about by new professional information. Even though the program change had to be abandoned after the District Superintendent undermined the authority of the principal, the example does show how the principal gained information then used it in a constructive way.

Our research indicated another type of problem with utilization of knowledge which is closely related to the previous example. It can be argued, by using the research data, that the system simply does not allow the principal to use the vast amount of professional information that he or she can acquire. There are too many system-wide constraints which prevent the use of this knowledge.

The contract between the Board of Education and the Chicago Teachers Union represents an excellent example of this type of constraint the principal feels. In one case in our data, this problem is vividly illustrated. Our principal recognized, after about six weeks of school, that the best way to help a particular child with his reading problems was to change his classroom. The principal knew that there was one fine teacher who could perform miracles with reading problems of this particular nature. The previous year the principal had obtained professional information about a special reading program and had encouraged this teacher to study the program. The teacher did so and has been very successful in implementing the new ideas she learned. When the principal went to the teacher, the teacher was willing to take the new child even though she already had 33 children, the maximum allowed in the Union contract. The school building union representative heard about the impending transfer and urged the teacher not to be a "rate breaker." The teacher acquiesced when she was told that the original classroom teacher was fully competent to deal with the child's problem. Even though it was clear that this child would benefit from the teacher who studied the new information obtained by the principal, the transfer was never completed. Here is a situation in which information was obtained and even being used but organizational constraints interfered with full utilization.

## 4. Summary

This research study concludes with mixed findings related to (a) the extent to which school principals are exposed to, and aware of, professional information and (b) the degree to which this knowledge influences the principal's work. The study indicates that efforts are made to disseminate professional information within the system and that a select group of principals gains information from this form of dissemination and from study of professional literature. The vast majority of principals, however, seem to gain limited professional information and, further, they seem unable or unwilling to use this information in their work. It has been suggested in this chapter that various factors such as organizational politics and other constraints hamper the utilization of knowledge gained by certain principals. The difficulty of influencing change in the system was found to further discourage principals from actively pursuing changes based on the professional information they do have. The general impression one gets from the research study is that professional information is readily obtained but utilization of this information by principals is frustrated by political, attitudinal and structural factors inherent in the school system.

## Footnotes

[1] Knott, Jack and Aaron Wildavsky, "If Dissemination is the Solution, What is the Problem?" Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization, Vol. 1, No. 4, June, 1980. p. 544.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 544-45.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 544.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 545.

# CHAPTER XI

# CONCLUSION: TOWARDS THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING

## A. INTRODUCTION

Our study was inaugurated without a tightly fashioned theoretical framework. Two central, and complementary, questions guided the field work: (1) What is it that large-city principals do during their working day? and, (2) How do building principals exercise administrative discretion within the loose framework of a large-city public school system? We explored the first question with the aid of time usage rubrics and administrative role categories developed by Mintzberg in his inquiry into the nature of managerial work[1].

We examined the second question (discretionary decision-making) on the belief that administrative behavior at the critical "site-level" of service delivery in education involves important questions of policy interpretation and implementation amidst the vagaries of organizational and environmental constraint. We followed Lineberry's cue that the many "little decisions" made at the bottom of an organizational hierarchy are cumulatively just as important as the "key decisions" made at the top.[2] From an imprecise sense of initial research emphasis, our study has subsequently moved toward an appreciation of the organizational world of the large-city principalship, offering an opportunity, after our years of ethnographic research, for us to tender some suggestions for an improved theoretical understanding of the principal's discretionary behavior.

## B. SOME GUIDING IDEAS

In his study of the federal bureaucracy (the U.S. State Department) Warwick concluded:

> Rather like the anthropologist about to enter an unknown community, the student of public organizations would do well to assemble the available information about the agency and its public setting and arrive at no hasty conclusions about the applicability of existing theories and conceptual structures.[3]

Similarly, both Wilson[4] and Greenfield[5] have urged the use of methodologies in education research that are not prematurely overstructured by theory or previous research. These authors and others (e.g., Glazer and Straus,)[6] are careful to point out, however, that an unplanned and haphazard style of data collection is not an acceptable approach either. Observations of organizations and their behaviors must be guided by a thorough knowledge of theory and must be systematically undertaken with a view to continuous testing for theoretical adequacy.

Our research on the discretionary behavior of principals, while conceptually loose overall, was guided from the beginning, by the following notions of managerial life in a public school bureaucracy.

First, we recognized quite early that there was much disagreement among key organizational actors regarding just how much authority and discretionary decision-making power building administrator's actually have. In 1976, a city newspaper published the results of a questionnaire that it had distributed among public school principals. A key finding (and newspaper headline) declared that seventy percent of the respondents recommended increasing the power of building principals. The newspaper claimed that the city's principals consider themselves "toothless tigers," who are asked to face increasingly complex social problems but are very uncertain as to how much authority they have to draw upon.

This viewpoint is echoed in Daniel Griffiths' observation that "School principals, long considered men-in-the-middle, have been deprived of virtually all authority, and now only the most astute survive through a finely tuned political acumen."[7] It is in this area of "fine tuning," however, that one finds considerable opportunity for principal discretion. Although the formally designated prerogatives of the city principalship are quite limited and rather unclear, informally the system seems to provide considerable leeway. For example, a seemingly "tight," formula-based system for assigning the school-by-school budget becomes, under investigation, more open to negotiation between principal and superior than at first appears. We were cautioned to look for the subtleties, the nuances, and the "politics" of principals' behavior in "bending" organizational rules and procedures that appear on the surface to be rather clearcut and inflexible.

A second notion guiding our investigation was that discretionary behavior can be profitably studied within the boundaries of a sense of managerial constraint. As Sayles[8] and others (e.g., Argyris,[9] Patten[10]) have suggested, the "first-line supervisor" in an organization commonly finds himself placed in the middle of a system of conflicting relationships. The school principal, like the industrial foreman, occupies a kind of cross-fire position within the organizational hierarchy--caught between the needs of management above and the needs of employees and the organization's clients (e.g., pupils, parents) below. These conflicting relationships operate to constrain the decision-making of each site level administrator. The principal is pulled in one direction by his awareness of local school interests but is pulled in another direction by the requirements of the larger organization. In studying the principalship, we tried to find and identify those dilemmas of conflicting interest and constraint that were most often at work in discretionary situations. How, for example, does a principal handle irate parents who are upset over the extreme instability of teacher assignments to their school (e.g., four different first-grade teachers assigned to one classroom in the first eight weeks of the year)? He must balance this parental concern against the requirement that he is bound by the union contract (class size and job seniority) and must yield to federal government specifications (faculty desegregation guidelines) in assigning teachers.

Third, we gave special attention, from the beginning of our research, to the "interface" position of the principal between clientele and bureaucracy. The principal is education's most visible, "on-line" administrator, working managerially at the pivotal point of exchange between teacher, pupil, parent, and educational bureaucracy. In a role that has been given the labels "boundary-spanning" (Moore)[11] and "street-level bureaucrat" (Lipsky),[12] the building principal finds that he is surrounded by situational uncertainty. Organizational rules and procedures must be adapted to neighborhood conditions but the organization must also be buttressed and protected from neighborhood-generated disturbances to organizational equilibrium. Thus, our data collection concentrated heavily upon the principals' applications of school policy at organizational boundaries, asking how discretionary decision-making responded to the special circumstances that characterize each school's immediate "community." How, for example, does a principal implement pupil desegregation guidelines in a neighborhood that is most vocal in its opposition to the desegregation idea?

## C. ORGANIZATIONAL RULES

A common image of large-city public-school bureaucracy is that of an organization bogged down (see Rogers, 1968) by a mass of restrictive and tightly woven rules, regulations, and standard operating procedures. One of our first findings was that although some rules are in fact fully developed, very specific, and "tight," much of the procedural policy of the school system contains considerable looseness and flexibility. Complaints by principals about organizational procedures are more likely to center on the vagueness of language and the lack of clearcut administrative direction than upon the rigidity and restrictiveness of "tight" rules that provide too little administrative discretion. An order from school headquarters to building principals, for example, directed them to begin laying off teacher aides in their schools as a result of a budget cutback. Nothing in the order, however, specified how. Were the layoffs to be based strictly on seniority, or was there room to be more selective (e.g., keeping the harder workers)? Upon request, little additional help was forthcoming from headquarters; thus some principals used a seniority criterion, and others used the merit criterion, many of them complaining about lack of guidance from higher up.

Even in those areas generally acknowledged to be most heavily "bounded" procedurally (e.g., teachers' contract provisions regarding teacher dismissal) principals' concerns about restrictiveness focus upon rigid time limitations rather than limits in the substance of their administrative actions. For example, notices of unsatisfactory teacher performance, and classroom visits by both the principal and a higher-level supervisor, must be undertaken within a clearly specified period of time. If a second notice of unsatisfactory teaching is not received by the teacher by the end of exactly the 51st school day following the receipt of a first unsatisfactory evaluation, then the whole dismissal procedure is voided. Unspecified, however, in either the union contract or other administrative guidelines is just what constitutes unsatisfactory classroom teaching. That judgment is left to each principal.

It was the intent of our research to find out how principals in varying situational circumstances (e.g., both elementary and high schools, large and small schools, inner-city and city-periphery schools) interpret and implement the same body of organizational rules and procedures. We observed how principals dealt with common categories of rules and procedures (e.g., budgeting and resource allocation, student discipline, personnel management, community relations); and we were able to watch the discretionary behavior of principals on a range of issues in varieties of situations within each category.

Again, we were struck more by the lack of specificity in the organization's rules and procedural guidelines than by their rigidity, comprehensiveness, or pervasiveness. There was a considerable degree of principalship discretion built into the school district's administrative system--in contrast to many elements of procedure permitting little discretion (e.g., the time restriction in teacher dismissal).[13] Annual budget allocations to each building, for example, are keyed to student enrollment. Yet many important ingredients in the enrollment measure (e.g., attendance area boundaries, student transfer policy, school learning policy), are not firmly defined or regulated and are recognized areas of principalship discretion.[14]

From an initial interest in how much discretion can be exercised by building principals and whether some principals "bend the rules" more than others, our attention became more centrally focused on the effects of principalship discretion. Recognizing that building administrators have wide managerial latitude under the school district's rules and procedures,[15] we asked what kinds of effects the principal's discretionary behavior had on the individual school, on the surrounding community, on the organizational hierarchy, and on the principal's own career progress. From this study of the effect of principaling behavior, we have drawn together the following set of theoretical propositions about the school principalship. These propositions are put forward as tentative conclusions from our one-city study and must be tested further in other settings with a variety of methodologies.

## D. PROPOSITIONS ON PRINCIPALS' DISCRETION

### 1. Principals use discretionary opportunity to maintain their school site in an acceptable equilibrium with the organizational environment.

The building principal plays an organization maintenance role. We observed principals devoting large amounts of principaling time to the following:

- -- cruising the corridors, sometimes just to "show the flag" of authority.
- -- making routine searches of washrooms, storage areas, stairwell closets where disruptive students sometimes hang out.
- -- showing up unannounced at chronic "trouble sites" to anticipate or head off disturbances.
- -- managing "fall-out" from disruptions and holding further unrest to a minimum.

We interpret these behaviors to be manifestations of an effort to keep things in equilibrium and to maintain an atmosphere of control amidst a generally unpredictable environment.

The principal also bends the rules to retain staff, to hold on to or enhance budget resources, to keep enrollments high, and to reward cooperative teachers with desirable assignments or special favors. These behaviors also provide evidence that a major component of successful principaling is the ability to keep the school-site workplace operating smoothly under effective administrative control.

### 2. Principals use discretion to protect the school system from the uncertainties of an unpredictable clientele.

The building principal is generally expected both to be responsive to and to protect the organization from its parent and community clientele. Teachers expect the principal to buttress them from parental "harassment", but both teachers and principals want parents to be "involved" and open to the instructional program. In balancing interests of parental involvement and institutional autonomy, principals use discretion to mold parental expectations, to guide and channel parental involvement, and to either reward or punish parents who seek assistance. Additionally, through close attention to the information supplied by the immediate neighborhood (e.g., through an adroit handling of "crazy mother as mascot" or through the use of "spotters" in homes near the school) principals anticipate the problems and uncertainties surrounding the school system at its service delivery boundaries and manage to ward off or neutralize potential trouble before it "gets out of hand."

### 3. Principals use discretion to adapt organizational policies to the needs and interests of the local community clientele.

Principals interpret organizational rules and procedures in a manner that blends organizational purpose with community receptiveness. The point is not unlike Wolcott's claim that the principal plays an "interface" role of softening organizational "insensitivity" by providing a "human sensitivity of his own."[16] The proposition suggests that the principal applies organizational directives to fit clientele interests. New curriculum procedures (e.g., a mastery learning initiative), new organizational policies (e.g., a change from holding students in school over the lunch hour to sending them home from lunch), or new school attendance policies (e.g., an open enrollment plan as part of a desegregation initiative) are often "pushed" by the building principal only to the point of community acceptance (or are at least softened a bit or are implemented more slowly and tentatively than organizational timelines have called for). Although the use of principalship discretion can bias educational policy toward non-implementation (a point made by Rogers)[17], it can also provide a flexibility and adaptiveness that meets local needs and protects the organization from attack.

### 4. Principals use discretion to realize their own personal goals and to provide themselves satisfaction and direction amidst a complex, disordered organizational environment.

The role of the city principal is highly varied and very unpredictable. The official job description is loosely worded, and the duties and responsibilities of the position are, to say the least, open ended; e.g., principals are the "responsible administrative heads of their respective schools and are charged with the organization, supervision and administration, and discipline thereof."

In the actual work situation, the principalship turns out to be an uneasy blend of reactive and initiatory elements. On the reactive side, the principal is constantly alert to "what's going to happen next?" The job consists to a great extent in responding to events as they develop minute by minute in the ongoing life of a school. But there is also a widely accepted normative sense that the principal should be actively engaged in instructional improvement, staff development, and curriculum innovation. Thus, in the day-to-day reality of the job, the flexibility and autonomy of the position engender a proactive attitude which finds expression in a variety of avenues toward job satisfaction.

Some principals enjoy working with teachers and tinkering with strategies for instructional improvement. They often experience a sense of frustration and defeat in these initiatives, but they find fulfillment in making the effort, hoping that there will be a pedagogical change for the better "in some way." Other principals avoid activities which have no end product, and orient their energies toward those activities which seem to exhibit some observable pay-off. They occupy themselves with fund raising, with procurement of materials or equipment, with the development of extra-curricular activities (e.g., pupil performances at assembly, festivals, sports events). Still other principals seem to enjoy the "law enforcement" or pastoral aspects of their job. They devote energies to student counseling, to school discipline, and to the never-ending task of straightening out miscreants and directing them, through father-figure therapy, into positive channels of adult life. Finally, still other principals enjoy the quasi-political aspects of their position. They like to "work the streets" by spending time with community people, with PTA mothers, with local politicians, and to parlay this "public affairs" behavior into high visibility for their schools and themselves with the district superintendent and those in higher echelons.

The job of principal therefore takes on the coloration of the practitioner's own value set and personal preferences. As a group, principals share with one another a kind of upbeat gregariousness. Typically they are not reflective, nor are they intellectuals; instead they are oriented to person-to-person relationships, most of which (as noted elsewhere in this report) are conducted in a direct verbal, face-to-face manner. Nevertheless, they play out their gregariousness in a number of different directions. As noted above, some enjoy spending their time with teachers, others much prefer interacting with youngsters, and still others face outward to the community, to local politicians, and of course to their hierarchical superiors. Every principal has a "prime sector" for job-satisfaction activities. Although some time is spent in every sector, the typical principal tends to exploit the opportunities in the favorite sector for maximum job fulfillment.

### 5. Principals use discretion to acquire "subunit" power vis-a-vis the larger educational organization.

Each of a school district's buildings (school sites) is a "subunit" of the larger organizational system. Power (status, authority, prestige) is not distributed equally among school subunits; principals work hard to try to "better" the competitive position of their school in comparison with other school sites. Three key discretionary activities enable the site-level administrator to enhance his relative position in the larger system. A first activity is the banking or "stockpiling" of available resources despite the constraints imposed by the organization's rules and procedures (see Thompson[18]). Wherever possible, both extra students and staff members, for example, will be kept on board by principals (often through manipulations of allocation procedures or through "loopholes" in the provision of information to upper-level administrators). A second activity is the development of strong political ties within the local community. A dangerous strategy at times (for upper-level administrators do not appreciate the blatant use of community pressure), a strongly supportive community is nevertheless a valuable resource that can be used selectively and judiciously to protect or enhance the local school. A third activity is image building. The school system is influenced by reputation. A principal's ability to advertise the special qualities of his or her school (e.g., excellence in sports, academic success, an unusual curriculum) insures special consideration and attention from "downtown" in teacher placement, facilities renovation, even snow removal.

### 6. Principals use their discretion to adapt to the career advancement/reward system of the larger educational organization.

Principals are conscious of opportunities for reward and advancement. Advancement generally involves a transfer to a larger school (for the larger the school the higher the principal's salary), or it involves an appointment to an administrative position at a district office or "downtown." Among those principals not overly attuned to career advancement in this manner, there is still an interest in holding on to what one now has or in avoiding transfer to a "dead end" administrative job.

Neither the criteria nor the procedures employed in evaluating principals are very clearly specified. Nevertheless building principals take care to present a favorable, sometimes glowing picture of their school in each category of measured outcome. Similarly, it is well understood informally by administrators throughout the city that the building principal's immediate superior, the district superintendent (DS) generally expects each school to be well under control, free of "sticky" problems that must be brought to the district superintendent's constant attention. Thus, principals take steps to suppress teacher grievances, parental complaints, or teacher dismissal proceedings that require the DS to take action.

### 7. Principals use discretion to protect the school site from interference in its instructional endeavor.

A significant norm, shared by both the building principal and his professional staff is that the principal's job is to protect the instructional work of the school from undue interference. In communication with parents, principals will interpret and apply school rules in a manner that "backs up" the school's teachers. Similarly principals will attempt to fulfill organizational demands (e.g., forms to be completed, students to be placed in instructional programs) in ways that minimize the burden upon the teaching faculty. Complicated and time-consuming procedures for special education placement, for example, may be shortcut in order to reduce the intensity of teacher involvement.

Principals also protect the instructional work of the school by lubricating the school district's flow of paperwork, facilitating the distribution of textbooks and supplies, or trouble-shooting a personnel problem for a classroom teacher. Schools often experience shortfalls in the numbers of needed textbooks or vital materials (e.g., report cards or attendance forms), or occasionally a vital document has not been delivered on schedule. Principals soon discover that "going through channels" to remedy these shortages is inefficient. Instead, they short-circuit the organizational labyrinth and, on their own, negotiate a textbook exchange with a fellow principal, or search out some extra curriculum guides in a closet at the district office, or personally track down a missing paycheck for a teacher. Only with such an extra-bureaucratic maneuver can a principal keep the educational program of the school on schedule.

## Chapter Summary

We conclude from our research that there is much, rather than little, discretion available to the building administrator in education. Contrary to popular belief, the educational bureaucracy in a large-city environment is only loosely constrained by organizational rules and operating procedures. There is much room at the school site-level (education's point of service delivery) for flexibility and adaptability in the application of school system policy. We studied the effects of principals' discretionary behavior on the school, the community, the organizational hierarchy and the principals own career advancement--and have offered a set of propositions to encourage further study: Building principals use discretion (a) to maintain the school site in environmental equilibrium, (b) to protect the school system from the uncertainties of an unpredictable clientele, (c) to adapt school system policies to the unique needs of each local community, (d) to provide for their own job satisfaction, (e) to acquire subunit power vis-a-vis the larger school system, (f) to adapt to the career advancement mechanism of the school system, and (g) to protect the school from interference in its instructional endeavor.

## Footnotes

[1] Mintzberg, H. The Nature of Managerial Work (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

[2] Lineberry, R.L. Equality and Urban Policy: The Distribution of Municipal Public Services (Beverly Hills, Calif. : Sage Publications, Inc., 1977).

[3] Warwick, Donald P., A Theory of Public Bureaucracy: Politics, Personality and Organization in the State Department (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1975) p. 204.

[4] Wilson, S. "The Use of Ethnographic Techniques in Educational Research," Review of Educational Research Winter, 1977, Vol. 4, pp. 245-265.

[5] Greenfield, T.B. "Idea versus Data: How Can the Data Speak for Themselves," in G.L. Immegart and W.L. Boyd (eds), Problem-Finding in Educational Administration (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1979): 167-190.

[6] Glaser, B.G. and Strauss, A.L., The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1967).

[7] Griffiths, D.E., "The Individual in Organization: A Theoretical Perspective," Educational Administration Quarterly Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring 1977), pp. 1-18.

[8] Sayles, L.R. Managerial Behavior: Administration in Complex Organizations (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964).

[9] Argyris, C. Personality and Organization (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957).

[10] Patten, T.H., Jr., The Foreman: Forgotten Man of Management (American Management Association, Inc., 1968).

[11] Moore, M.T. "The Boundary Spanning Role of the Urban School Principal," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1975).

[12] Lipsky, M. "Toward a Theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy," in W.D. Hawley, et al. (eds), Theoretical Perspectives on Urban Politics, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976): 196-213.

[13] Some recent developments suggest that this condition is rapidly changing. Wise (1979) cautions that state and federal program requirements are seriously impacting upon the autonomy of local schools, and Kerchner, et. al., (1980) warn that collective bargaining is increasingly facing building principals with demands for uniformity from central office staff in conflict with a push for flexibility at the school site level.

[14] Interestingly, we discovered that in situations where procedures are very highly specified, principals will often (with a bit of perverse pleasure) "get back" at the system by sticking rigidly to "the letter-of-the-law." In filling out forms (e.g., a survey of school enrollments by race), standards, definitions of terms, and procedures may be followed exactly as written even though principals know well that the guidelines are out of phase with reality and that incorrect information will flow upward through the system.

[15] This is not to suggest, again, that this discretionary latitude is as broad today as it was some years ago. Principals complain loudly that the system is steadily "closing in" on them. Most often mentioned is loss of choice in the assignment of teachers to schools and the burden of state and federal procedures for special education placement, plus the legal constraints surrounding "due process" in student discipline.

[16] Wolcott, H.F., The Man in the Principal's Office: An Ethnography (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973), p. 320.

[17] Rogers, D. 110 Livingston Street (New York: Vintage Books, 1968).

[18] Thompson, J.D. Organizations in Action (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967).

# PART FIVE

# APPENDICES

A - Rosters of Academic Advisory Committee and Professional Advisory Committee

B - The Decision-making of Researchers: A Look into the Process of Ethnographic Research in School Administration

C - The Heisenberg Problem: The Effect of the Observer on Observed Phenomena

## APPENDIX A

## Rosters of Academic Advisory Committee and Professional Advisory Committee

Principalship Project

### Academic Advisory Committee

Chas. Bidwell, University of Chicago
Sheppard Kellam, University of Chicago
R. Bruce McPherson, University of Illinois Chicago Circle
Paul Peterson, University of Chicago
Russ Spillman, the Ohio State University

### Professional Advisory Board

Preston Bryant, Superintendent, Dist. 10
Joan M. Ferris, Principal, Dett
Martin Gabriel, Dept. Spec. Ed.
Martin Gray, Principal, Amundsen
Gerald Heing, Asst. Superintendent, Dept. Curr.
Olga Kaszubowski, Principal, Dirksen
Joseph LaVizzo, Jr., Principal, Bryn Mawr
Esther Lawson, Principal, Hirsh
Theodore Lewis, Superintendent, Dist. 19
Charles Lutzow, Principal, Durso
James F. Moore, Superintendent, Dist. 18
Lawrence J. McBride, Principal, Fiske
Loretta Nolan, President, Chicago Principals Association
Herschel J. Rader, Principal, Johnson
Mary E. Shannon, Principal, Ogden
Thomas Van Dam, Superintendent, School District 151
Donn Wadley, Director, Program Development

# APPENDIX B

## THE DECISION MAKING OF RESEARCHERS: A Look into the Process of Ethnographic Research in School Administration

### 1. Introduction

In recent years several articles written for educators have offered explanations of ethnographic methods of research.[1] As a group, these works present excellent introductory information about ethnography. Educators are likely to be interested in these articles for two reasons. Some may want to consider the data and findings that the method produces as a supplement to other research in education. Other educators want to use ethnographic techniques in their own research. What follows is addressed to the second group.

The research team for this study consisted of professional educators, not ethnographers. Only one of the four had previous experience with ethnographic research. Each was inspired by the idea of observing principals on the job. Three of the team had a long standing interest in school administration and had focused their graduate studies in that area. The fourth team member was an experienced ethnographer and not a specialist in school administration. This contrast was seen as an advantage by the group. The experienced ethnographer emerged as the methodologist, focusing on data collection and record keeping. The professors of administration sought to place their research experience and field data within the framework of their understanding of educational administration and related management theory. During the three and one half years of the project, these roles eventually became blurred--as the educational administrators became interested in issues concerning the method; and the methodologist began to explore administrative patterns that were reflected in the field data.

It is difficult to reconstruct how the team came to work together as a research unit. There are, however, several experiences that were shared as a group that seem to have contributed to the working structure that the group developed.

a. Team fieldwork--The first field experience was a team experience. Two school principals volunteered to help get the project started. Each team member spent three days with both principals. Team meetings were scheduled before, during and after the field days. The discussions that sprang out of these meetings helped the group share their impressions of both principals. They discovered that impressions of each subject were pretty much the same, although the language style and detail of description in the field notes varied greatly among these members.

The shared impressions also helped in the subsequent selection of new subjects, in planning for starting up new research sites, and in forming initial research questions based on early field observations. Furthermore, the act of getting into the field and starting observations moved the group from interesting but aimless hypothetical discussions about field research to problem solving and planning related to questions that had their genesis in the field experience.

b. Tentative findings--From the earliest field days the team has been reporting out tentative findings as they relate to research design, field data, data analysis, and the work patterns of urban school principals. Several benefits have been received. Feedback from conference audiences and advisory groups on these findings has been a valuable addition to the process of thinking about and seeing into field data. Preparing for the presentations has forced the researchers to seek intervals of closure in a research process that pushes the researcher into ever widening and expanding channels of data collection. The pressure to recheck tentative findings while still in the field helped keep the researchers attuned to the outcomes of the project, in addition to documenting and recording the complexities of administrative behavior at each site. At national and local conferences, the full team participated in presenting findings. This practice underscored the team effort, emphasized the sense of mutual support that had developed, and inspired the members to explore and examine issues that were raised during each presentation. These conference presentations served as points in time when the team was in the same place, focused on the same issue, and testing its ideas before an audience of experts.

c. Site analysis--Several approaches were used to encourage team members to become familiar and work with data generated by colleagues. The most formal technique was a site analysis approach. During a series of scheduled meetings, researchers focused on field notes from a site and discussed issues related to research method and administrative practice. One outcome of the discussion was the paper in Appendix C on the Heisenberg problem, which examines the effect the researcher has on the site. The field notes, themselves, were also scrutinized during these sessions. The attention to time notations, reporting of detail, identification of actors during an event, and information about the flow of events were recurring topics during these sessions. Such comments took on increased importance as analytic instruments were developed to code interactions at the school site. As a result of these meetings the field reports became more complete and useful. As field data were shared, the body of data developed into a pool to which each researcher had access. The right of each researcher to freely dip into the team's data pool was established early in the project, and there was never a sense of individual ownership of a site.

d. Division of labor--Initially, the need to fund the research project led the team to divide up tasks and assign responsibilities in writing proposals to funding groups. As proposals were churned out, a division of labor developed in the team. Different members repeatedly wrote the first draft of sections on related theory, design and method, management plan, research schedule, product dissemination, budget and so on. For each proposal an editor pulled the various drafts together to give them one voice. This approach has carried over to the writing of results and reports.

e. Theoretical variety--To balance the blending of effort that a division of labor engenders, there has also developed a sense that a variety of theoretical approaches and methods of handling and synthesizing data could be encompassed within the structure of the project. This has allowed each team member to pursue his or her individual interests within the total framework. No one point of view, no one disciplinary theory or language, no single interpretation has been imposed by the group. This prism approach to reporting our findings allows individual inspiration and insight to guide the use of data.

## 2. Decisions about the Application of Ethnographic Techniques

The process of planning an approach to the study of urban school principals eventually turned the research away from a pure use of ethnographic method. Still, important elements of a traditional approach were in many ways preserved. Principals were observed while they went about their jobs, in schools and elsewhere, as they proceeded through their daily schedule. Every effort was made to learn the subject's interpretations of events and interactions. At each site, the researcher sought to understand the principal's perspective on how he or she functioned in the school and in the superstructure of a large urban school system. Finally, topics of research later used in data analysis were not determined a priori, but were derived from field experience.

Other elements of ethnographic research were adapted to the requirements of the subjects and their organizational life. In the typical study a school site is developed by observing behavior in each subgroup (teachers, students, administrators, parents) and rendering a wholistic picture of how these groups interact to form a social system. In his ethnographic study of the principalship, Wolcott adapted this approach by focusing on one principal, observing his interaction with the various subgroups in the school. In order to create a wholistic account, he approached each subgroup to learn its opinion of the principal.[2] The selected principal he thought was "very representative" of most principals.

It would be difficult to find a representative school within a large urban system. Schools vary widely according to their size, organization and the student population. Principals, too, come from a wide range of economic and racial backgrounds and the percentage of women principals is much larger than in other systems. The wholistic focus of the study shifted from getting the broad understanding of a school site through the eyes of many subgroups, to getting a broad understanding of the principal's job through the eyes of many principals with a variety of origins administering a variety of school settings.

The decision to focus on the job of principal within the organization of a school system, rather than on a typical principal in a single school site, had further ramifications for the design of the study. It directed the team toward organization and management theory, rather than social and cultural theory, for the interpretation of data. Eventually, this led to the study of Henry Mintzberg and his classification of managerial work based on on-the-job observations of managers.[3]

## 3. Gaining Access to Research Sites

In many cases the most direct way to obtain permission to conduct research in a school is to ask the principal's permission. In the case of this study, the researchers were reasonably sure that individual principals, if approached directly, would agree to being observed as they conducted business in their school building. In order to follow the principal to meetings at the district office, with bureaucrats downtown, or with fellow principals, it was necessary to seek a more general and inclusive access to the system, as a whole. Considerable investigation revealed that in order to obtain access to the range of on-the-job activities of principals it would be necessary to have (1) Board of Education approval of the study and permission to conduct research, (2) permission of the subject's supervisor, the district superintendent, and (3) agreement from each individual subject to participate as a subject of research.

It took over a year to lay the groundwork for this extensive form of access. The decision, early on, to seek co-sponsors for the research project and to enlist the help of the co-sponsors in obtaining access, proved to be essential to the success of the project.

The first group that was invited to co-sponsor the research was the Chicago Principals Association. The idea of getting a picture of the job of principal appealed to the CPA. They offered seed money to initiate the study. With this help, field studies were eventually undertaken with two volunteers. Also, an advisory board of principals and central administrators from the city was appointed. At the same time, an advisory board of academics was appointed and meetings were held with both groups.

While the study was in its earliest phases, a new superintendent of schools was appointed in the city. It was possible to meet with one of his newly appointed assistants, who liked the idea of the project and promised to raise the idea with the superintendent. Although the superintendent was said to approve of the idea, months went by without the matter being brought before the Board of Education.

In the meantime, the new superintendent formed a Center for Urban Education to conduct in-service training for personnel. It was possible to speak with the newly appointed Director of the CUE. He liked the idea for the project because he felt it could eventually provide direction for in-service training of principals. He shared with the researchers the fact that the CUE was underwritten in part by the Spencer Foundation and that some of that money might be directed toward the research project. When CUE adopted the project and agreed to apply $20,000 to the study of eight principals, the research design was brought before the Board of Education and approved.

Once subjects were selected through use of the variables grid, access was secured in the following way. Subjects were first approached by an officer of the CPA and asked to participate. All but one agreed to do so. The Director of the CUE then contacted the subjects' District Superintendents and asked their permission for the principal to participate. All but one superintendent granted permission. The fact that CPA and CUE co-sponsored the research and that the project had Board of Education approval were important elements in obtaining permission. The researchers followed up with official letters inviting participation of the principals and acknowledging permission by the District Superintendent. Then the researchers met with the subjects and explained the procedures and ground rules to be used during research. Rather than gaining access to all sites at once, subjects were identified, access secured and the site started up, a few at a time. Once a group was active and working, a new set of subjects was selected. In this way, the pressure of time and of numbers did not contribute to a sense that subjects were being rushed or processed.

## 4. Data Collection and Record Keeping

The construction of field notes proved to be more of an individual matter than had been anticipated. Team members employed various methods of writing up their field notes. Some members dictated notes to be transcribed by a typist, another preferred to handwrite the protocols to be typed later, and another typed the protocols directly from notes made on site. In these various ways, a typed document of each field day was produced.

Each team member was released from some teaching and administrative time to work on the project. Two researchers were released for one-half time and two for one-quarter time. Research sites were assigned to reflect this difference in released time. During the most fully scheduled period of research, the one-half time researchers carried five sites each, and the one-quarter time researchers carried two.

For each day in the field, at an average of 7.5 hours per day, it took another full day to prepare field notes. At least one half day each week was devoted to reading protocols, to data analysis or to preparing preliminary papers and reports. At this pace, it was reasonable to expect the one-half time researchers to complete one site visit per week and the one-quarter time researchers to complete a visit every other week.[4]

These averages reflect the over-all time distributions, however, and not the actual working patterns of each researcher. A researcher might spend three days observing in one week and preparing field notes and drafting a conference paper the following two weeks. In reality, no one limited work on the project to the hours paid for by the National Institute of Education.

## 5. Data Analysis

As exemplified in this report, three kinds of data analysis are used in this project. A data reduction instrument has been used to profile elementary school and high school principals. The percentage of time different principals spend at different managerial functions is presented. These data are used to point out differences among principals as well as to look at trends that reflect the principals' use of time in both groups. Because each event is described in field notes, it is possible to examine unusual or unexpected trends in the context of event description. This bridge between the event in the field notes provides the researcher with access to the context in which each event occurred, and thereby, insight into its purpose, its cause, and its ultimate effect.

Patterns of discretionary administrative behavior are illustrated through descriptions of events. Since patterns are varied and complex, a range of events is frequently selected in order to explicate the range of administrative behavior in a single pattern. By drawing on events from field descriptions of behavior by many principals, the researcher can illustrate a number of outcroppings that indicate the presence of an underlying structural element that shapes the activity of school principals.

The case studies provide a third vantage point on the data. There, the behavior of a single administrator is presented within the context of the site, the principal's view of the job and the school system, and the particulars of the case situation. These cases illustrate the interrelationship of individual style, organizational structure and the specific context for administrative decision-making. Patterns in school administration can thereby be seen in relationship to one work setting and the routines of particular individuals.

By offering three different treatments of field data, three perspectives on the data are presented. The data reduction instrument aids in constructing work profiles that express patterns derived from examination of every single event observed over three and one-half years. The patterns illustrated through exemplary events show the quality of the pattern as it was observed in different forms. The case studies represent a synthesis of the administrator's personal style, patterns by which principals respond to the demands of events, and the constraints on administrative decision making set by the organization and by the principal's understanding of it.

## Footnotes

[1] Lutz, F.W. and Ramsey, M.A., "The Use of Anthropological Field Methods in Education," Educational Research, Vol. 3, No. 10, 1974, pp. 5-9;
Wolcott, Harry, "Criteria for an Ethnographic Approach to Research in Schools," Human Organization, Summer 1975, Vol. 34, pp. 111-127;
Everhart, Robert B., "Ethnography and Education Policy: Love and Marriage or Strange Bedfellows," Council on Anthropology and Education Quarterly, Vol. 7, No. 3, August, 1976;
Wilson, Stephen, "The Use of Ethnographic Techniques in Educational Research," Review of Educational Research, Winter, 1977, Vol. 4, pp. 245-265;
Wolcott, Harry, "One Elementary School Principal: Notes from a Field Study," in Educational Organization and Administration, Donald A. Erickson (ed.), Berkeley, California: McCutchan Publishing Corp., 1977, pp. 512-541;
Zigarmi, Drea and Alexa Lindquist, Editors, Education and Urban Society, Vol. 12, No. 3, May, 1980.

[2] Wolcott, Harry, The Man in the Principals Office, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973).

[3] Mintzburg, Henry, The Nature of Managerial Work, (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

[4] Miles, Matthew B., "Qualitative Data as an Attractive Nuisance: The Problem of Analysis," Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 24, No. 4, December, 1979, pp. 590-601.

# APPENDIX C

## THE HEISENBERG PROBLEM:
## The Effect of the Observer on Observed Phenomena

### A. Background

As we, the research team, engaged in this ethnographic job analysis of the school principalship, we were mindful of the fact that ethnography, as a methodology, has a long history, stretching back to its anthropological beginnings in Bronislaw Malinowski, Alfred Kroeber, Ruth Benedict, and--the grand dame of the discipline--Margaret Mead. Throughout the long career of direct-observation research, by these pioneers and by more recent ethnographic students of human organization, there has been a persistent unease regarding the objectivity of the data. This doubt about scholarly detachment was thought traceable to the subjectivity of the researcher, more specifically, the tendency of the researcher to observe (and record) what he or she wants to record rather than what is actually there in the phenomenal situation.

In recent years, a second explanation has come in for more sustained attention, namely, the degree to which the observer, through the mere act of observing, actually changes what is being observed. This problem was first brought to scientific attention by Werner Heisenberg, a German micro-physicist, who enunciated in the Twenties his now famous Principle of Indeterminacy. According to this principle, there is a certain uncorrectable randomness to the behavior of sub-atomic particles because there is no way for a physicist to observe and catalogue their movements without simultaneously disturbing those movements. The very energy developed by electron-microscopes to illuminate the target area alters the energy configuration of particles under study.

To consider a more homely illustration, this principle was once explained as the inherent difficulty of taking the temperature of a flea. Even if a thermometer could be made so small as to fit into one or another orifice of a flea, the temperature of the thermometer would change the temperature of the flea, rendering the reading essentially meaningless. Thus, according to this principle, physics is forever foreclosed from understanding certain natural phenomena under its otherwise studyable domain.

When this Heisenberg principle is transposed to the social sciences, a whole set of technical problems develop, especially those concerned with the authenticity of the data and the extraction of meaning from those data. Nowhere is this difficulty more pronounced than in the methodology of ethnography, in which a human being is observing the behavior not of electrons or fleas but that of other human beings like himself. In its most extreme form, ethnography is forced to turn human subjects into things, and to study them in such a way as to make it possible to describe their behavior in the most detached and bloodless of language. But short of that, how does the ethnographer detect and correct for any failure of detachment brought on by his mere presence?

## B. The Ethnographic Encounter

In the Chicago study, we entered the outskirts of this problem very early in the "access phase," namely, at that point when the pool of target principals had been narrowed down and we were about to make direct inquiries to gain the cooperation of our final sixteen. Having come to know the Chicago Public School System over the years and its reputation for being a closed society, often defensive and sometimes paranoid with outsiders, we were initially surprised that the resistance to cooperating with us was not stronger.[1] But as we continued our initial contacts with the final group of sixteen, we detected one unreported variable in this type of endeavor: School people are in awe of university professors, especially professors who do no teaching but are engaged in, a magic term . . . Research.

Thus, as we gained access to the schools and to the principals' offices, we, as researchers, represented a condition we could neither alter nor control, namely, a status differential with our subjects. But whereas this differential is commonplace and represents no disturbance in other studies, say, in the study of street gangs, business executives, or policemen, in the present study it appears to generate some psychological "noise." This is true, we believe, because unlike other ethnographic subjects, school principals aspire to university level work themselves, and they want to be like the researcher with his or her putative high level of knowledge and analytical skill. We discovered that school principals are romanced by the prospect of associating closely with university types and are drawn to this participation by personal/professional ambitions. Trobriand Islanders have no interest in assimilating their lives to the likes of Margaret Mead and what she stands for, but school principals positively wish to identify with the next aspiration level of their own profession--the university--and particularly with those who inhabit the magic kingdom of research and scholarship.

This means that the presence of the researcher in a principal's office does indeed constitute an original disturbance factor. This disturbance factor may be unavoidable; we may, that is, be too close in an occupational sense to our subjects. Principals work in a world not altogether different from our own, and the proximity of our work environments--at least in a psychological sense--may interfere with perception. On the other hand, this very proximity may be made to work in our favor. We cite the following four types of impact on the observation site and examine how they affect the research process:

### 1. Changed Work Patterns

In our visits to the school, we insist that the principal go about his or her business in a normal way and to ignore our presence as much as possible. This injunction is generally followed, except that the principals under observation naturally tend to direct their observed activities into areas in which (a) they feel comfortable, (b) they consider themselves especially competent, or (c) where conventional wisdom dictates that their time should be spent.

A blatant example of (c) above is the principal who apparently altered his plan for the day by setting out repeatedly, researcher in tow, on tours of the hallways, inspection of the cafeteria, checks of the washrooms, and short stops in several classrooms. As the researcher reported:

> The principal explained that this was the very first opportunity that he'd had that year (the visit was in late October) to get out into the school, and my (the researcher's) presence was the catalyst. He seemed quite shocked by what he found--a number of staff (e.g., cafeteria supervision aides, teachers on study hall duty) weren't found on station. The halls were noisy, dirty, and few students were displaying their ID cards.

A year later the researcher returned to the school and reported the following:

> In my first visit to X school this fall (in November, some ten weeks into the school year), the principal took time to visit classrooms (conducting brief teacher observations) throughout the school. Again, he mentioned that this was his first opportunity (!) all year to get around to the classrooms.

## 2. Intimidator-in-Residence

Far more common, in our experience, is the role of the researcher as a catalytic agent which alters the situation--a deflector of interruptions or a tension-reducing "blanket" for otherwise unpleasant interchanges. As one researcher has reported:

> One of my subjects had his desk situated so that he faced away from the door connecting with the outer office. I typically sat on a couch, with a view of both the principal at the desk and the door, with easy view of all who came to the doorway. Throughout each day, many persons came to the doorway and saw the principal at his desk, but seeing me as well, they retreated. I would often motion to the person to come in, but more often than not, the "intruder" would just back away and disappear. The principal's style of working with his back to the door had the effect of discouraging interaction as a matter of course, but my presence added significantly to this.

In more volatile situations, the researcher is often deliberately used by the principal to cool off an irate parent or a disgruntled teacher. The presence of a third party, no matter how neutral, detached or disinterested, works wonders in ameliorating and "rinsing out" the sometimes thick confrontational anger in a principal-parent conference. In the Chicago study, our policy has been voluntarily to absent ourselves when our presence would significantly interfere with such exchanges. In actual fact, such self-imposed absences have been very infrequent and we are fortunate to have sat in on some very hot sessions. However, our very presence ineluctably made such sessions significantly more serene than they otherwise would have been.

### 3. The Co-opted Employee

As ethnographic researchers, we are conscious at all times that our task is to remain as observers of the principalship. This has often, however, become extremely difficult; on numerous occasions we have become "participant" observers. Three examples are:

a. The Halloween Contest--School N is an elementary school on the south side of the city serving a racially mixed student population. Principal Jones had served several years elsewhere in the system as a principal, but was new to School N this year. During the researcher's early visits to the school, he had tried to establish rapport with Jones by listening to his problems and letting Jones use him as an understanding fellow professional. A comfortable relationship had developed, with the researcher being included in all aspects of the principal's work, including private meetings with parents and the district superintendent. In return for this full access, the principal had requested small favors on occasion. For example, could the researcher talk the head of the University's Spanish Department into being the graduation speaker, or could the researcher devote an hour to judge a science fair? One such "small favor" developed into an incident which raised the question of where to draw the line between establishing good rapport and gathering accurate ethnographic data. The incident grew out of a Halloween costume contest.

On an early visit to the school, the researcher had agreed, on the urging of the principal, to serve as costume judge at the Halloween assembly. Some weeks later on a return visit and just prior to the start of the assembly, the researcher learned for the first time that two other judges would join him and, moreover, that teachers' costumes as well as children's would be in the competition. The two other judges were also outsiders, one an accordionist (who would turn out to be the "hit" of the program) and the other a local leader of the League of Women Voters. Both were pleasant, amiable persons, easy to work with. Selection of the winner from among the children was readily accomplished. But, as the researcher and his two judge colleagues awaited the parade of teachers in costume, the principal approached the researcher and, sotto voce, made it clear to him that he wanted the Spanish teacher, Mrs. G., to win the contest. Jones said that he felt that Mrs. G had worked long hours on the Halloween program, that she was going to retire soon, and that her contributions over the years would justify some public acknowledgment. The problem was that her costume was not nearly as good as those of several of the other teachers.

The researcher weighed the risks of being manipulated in this fashion against the loss of rapport with Jones and access to the school. He needed the access, and there seemed to him little risk in trying to persuade the other two judges to go along. The researcher prevailed and Mrs. G was announced as the winner.

The decision to go along with Principal Jones was soon to become a serious mistake. Immediately after Jones announced that Mrs. G was the winner, several teachers huddled in a corner of the auditorium and decided to ask the judges to explain the decision. Even though the request to the judges was not made publicly, it was apparent to everyone in the auditorium that the decision was being questioned. A couple of teachers became angry and accused Jones of influencing the decision. Race became an issue with one teacher noting that Mrs. G was a known bigot and should not be honored in such a way, especially when her costume was not even nearly as good as others. The researcher was approached directly by one black/female teacher and asked why he would have selected her when "it was obvious that my costume is much nicer than hers." The researcher deflected her hostility with a smile and pretended that he was not a party to the decision,all the while hoping that the assembly would end immediately.

Fortunately it did, but the trouble was not over. During lunch in the teachers' lounge, the researcher was again asked to explain his decision. He simply said that the judge's decision is final and that there was nothing to discuss. This teacher then approached the Principal and accused him of influencing the contest. Jones reminded the teacher that Mrs. G was a particularly deserving winner but did not admit nor deny that he had influenced the decision. Jones privately admitted to the researcher somewhat later that influencing the judges was a mistake and that the incident probably was a step backward in his relationships with the teachers.

What lessons can we learn from this incident? Benny, Riesman and Star in a recent article struggle with the question of how to establish "a relationship of rapport, which encourages the researcher and his subject to speak as freely and frankly as may be without at the same time diverting the researcher from his reportorial duties or compelling the continuance of the relationship beyond the optimal point."[2] The Halloween example illustrates how tenuous, yet critical, the rapport factor can be. What could have been a routine intervention in the life of the school, causing no upset in the researcher's role as observer, turned out to be a questionable decision on his part. But even in this case the decision may have had a more positive than negative effect on the quality of the data recorded by the observer. Consider the following points:

--By allowing himself to be manipulated and co-opted, the researcher got to see the "real principal," to witness how this principal gets his job done. The behavior patterns observed after this incident took on new meaning; they revealed that this tactic was not uncommon in the workings of the school. The researcher was not aware of the practice until after he himself experienced it. The experience made him acutely aware of the subtle cues for which he should be alert. It was, therefore, easier for the researcher to identify this type of decision-making once he had had the experience.

--Once the researcher was familiar with this type of principal behavior, there was no longer any need for him to exclude it from his normal behavior. In retrospect, the researcher concluded that the principal was reluctant to admit that such influence and pressure politics, or game-playing, occur in the school until after the researcher had been "initiated" himself. In Heisenberg terminology, one might say that in this case the researcher got to know his fellow "atoms" better by becoming one of them temporarily.

--The interaction between observer and subject in this incident can also be explained in terms of a subordinate-superior relationship. The principal felt comfortable with the researcher because he allowed himself to be manipulated by him in much the same way that a teacher might be. The researcher was willing to take orders as a subordinate or to do as he was told. In many schools the rewards go to teachers who behave in this manner. The reward for the researcher here was continued access to the research site.

--Principals are severely limited in the discretionary powers they have to reward teachers for dedication and service to the school. Since so few options were available to Principal Jones, he was willing to risk his reputation to reward Mrs. G in this instance. Not the least of the incentives for the principal to arrange the outcome is the prestige of having a research professor from the University among the judges. The presence of the researcher, and the principal's understanding of his desire to maintain access and rapport, supplied the principal with a useful lever to use to reach his objective.

Since the underlying motive for becoming a participant-observer in the Halloween example (or in other examples to be described later) is the practical need to ensure access by maintaining good rapport, some of the findings by Benny, Riesman and Star should be more carefully reviewed here. Benny, *et al*. study the tendency among people for friendships to form, and they look at this in terms of its effect on an observer and his subject. They note that an observer "often finds canons of intimacy and privacy already established..."[3] In the case of the researcher and Principal Jones, there was considerable potential for friendship to form. Both were similar in age, professional achievement, career goals and even personality. There was also a desire to listen to each other which led to excellent understanding of each other's problems.

As noted by Benny, *et al*., common group affiliations among the researcher and his subjects tend to affect results as much as what the subject says or does.[4] In this case both researcher and principal had many common affiliations--administrative jobs, residential neighborhood, religious faith--and the likelihood of this affecting the findings is very high. Principal Jones may have seen this incident not as one of manipulation but more as "a friend helping a friend."

According to Benny, et al., good rapport sometimes operated against the best interest of those valuing it.[5] In the Halloween example, the researcher was so anxious to establish and maintain good rapport that he refused to disturb the camaraderie he had established with the principal even though he knew that what he was doing was inappropriate, perhaps outright dishonest. Benny, et al., given this case, would go on to show that there was poor communication between the principal and the observer even though the rapport was good. They so much enjoyed the interaction they were experiencing and the results it produced for each other that they failed to communicate. This failure to communicate caused them to experience a situation which was not beneficial to either nor probably to their educational institutions. Thus if the principal's effectiveness in the school is in the least diminished or if the researcher's objectivity is tarnished, neither has been well served.

b. The Researcher as Teacher During the Strike--The Chicago Public School teacher strike which occurred during the research period placed the research team in an unusual position. The members of the team wished to continue to collect data during the strike because the principals were on duty at their schools with a small uumber of students present. One researcher's experience indicates the level of rapport and trust that had developed between her and her subject principal. When she arrived to observe, she discovered that there were about sixty students present in a high school usually serving 3,000. Only six teachers had reported for work. Shortly after taking out her note pad and commencing the observation, the researcher was asked by the principal to take over a class of students. The researcher agreed to do so, but only on the condition that she would be allowed to interview the students and, by so doing, learn some background information about the school, including of course the principal. The principal complied with this request. In this situation, the principal was obviously very low on resources but his request to the researcher for non-research duty revealed that a level of mutual trust had developed between the two.

This incident probably had little effect on the objectivity of the data, but it did have considerable effect on ensuring future access in the school. A purist might argue that the researcher crossed the fine line which protects against contamination of data by saying that any actions other than observing and recording serve to change the context within which observations are made. The practical researcher realizes, however, that there was really no choice in this case, nor in most other similar instances. The researcher simply must do what is obviously necessary to maintain rapport with the principal.

c. The Researcher as Personal Advocate--A final illustration of an attempt to co-opt the researcher shows what happens when the researcher, at first reluctant to sacrifice the reportorial task to serve a purpose desired by the subject principal, agrees to do so when she (the researcher) realizes that new kinds of data can thereby be opened up.

In this situation, the researcher would show up at the school to begin the day's observation, whereupon the principal would in effect supsend his normal principaling activities and launch into a long, detailed monologue on his policy differences with the school system and some of his personal victories against his superiors. Since the researcher's previous visit, the principal would have collected and have ready an assembly of files and documents designed to support a particular complaint or to portray him in a positive light regarding some recent confrontation with his district superintendent or downtown staffers. In these episodes, the principal used the researcher as a one-person jury, and expected her to listen to his account, check it with the documents provided, and "rule" in his favor. Throughout these monologues, he spoke rapidly and insisted that the researcher get everything down on her note pad, even showing irritation with the researcher for not writing fast enough. The principal was distressed that when the research team's write-up of his school came to be drafted it would not fully tell "his story." He was concerned that the researcher might fail to live up to her end of the bargain, i.e., to tell the story of the administration of his school from *his* point of view.

Needless to say, there was no bargain. But the researcher decided to go along because, through this avenue of listening to and recording the *apologia* of the principal, she gained further insight into his principaling behavior. The principal may have thought that the feverish note-taking would eventuate in a public statement, or at least an internal memorandum, supporting his position. However, the researcher had other goals in mind. Data about the system, obtainable in no other way, was being gathered through this seemingly self-serving monologue of the principal. These data, different from the behavior log of the project's ethnographic techniques, would provide a special insight into organizational relationships as seen from a principal's perspective.

### 4. Sexual Management

A final example of the effect of the researcher on the research site centers on the sex roles being played by both the researcher and the principal. Sociologists and anthropologists have found that sex roles in our culture are clearly differentiated and each has its own set of behavior expectations. Thus researchers can be trained to minimize disparities of social class but not of sex.[6] We found in our research a particularly troublesome situation which seemed to defy interpretation. We sought numerous explanations, even scheduling a second researcher into the site to collect more data. It was finally concluded that sex roles may have affected this situation.

In this particular case, a tall, athletic, popular male principal of a large high school exhibited an administrative style which was difficult to characterize. He obviously had good control of his situation and his subordinates responded almost too well to his leadership. After six days in the school with the principal, the female researcher was puzzled and mystified; there was some ambiguity to the principal's mode of management which introduced a slightly jarring tone to the ambience of the school, but she was unable to specify this ambiguity precisely. This much was known: The principal did use his sexuality in relating to his female subordinates, both clerical and professional, and the researcher thought she detected some unspoken irritation and resentment among the females over this behavior. But, on the hypothesis that she was seeing only one side to the situation, she asked a male colleague researcher to spend some time in the school.

This second researcher observed for three days, looking specifically for instances of "sexual management" behaviors. He reported back to the research team on a few but, to him, benign instances of the principal's sex-oriented banter with his colleagues, e.g., jocular asides to his secretary on her split skirt, jesting with a teacher on closing the door for a "private conference." The male researcher concluded that these behaviors were unusual but probably not the cause of the problem of interpretation encountered by the female researcher.

The answer seemed to lie elsewhere. During his final visit, the male researcher, according to a scheduled routine, engaged the principal in a late-afternoon wind-up interview, asking specifically whether the presence of "principal watchers" in the school had altered the situation in any way. He responded in somewhat the following manner:

> Well, I don't think so. The two of you have stayed out of the way... Of course, C. (the female researcher) is a striking woman. She's tall, well-groomed and rather statuesque. When she is accompanying me about the building, obviously she is noticed by people. I think they see her and wonder about it. But, no, I don't think her presence had much effect on the way people reacted to me or how they went about their business.

After checking his notes again, the male researcher came to the opposite conclusion. The principal may or may not have been personally attracted to the female researcher, but it is clear that her presence did introduce a sexual element into the situation. Consider: Here is a virile, good-looking male principal being followed around day after day by an attractive woman paying close attention to everything he does and says. What do staff, students and teachers make of this? Certainly they cannot be indifferent to this sight. Whether there was physical attraction or not, members of the school community perceived one; in essence, their response was to introduce the sexual element when in fact it may not have been present. Their relations with the principal were both more guarded and more lighthearted, both more cryptic and more jocular, both more professional but also more socially quizzical--a curious blend of school business and inquisitive innuendo hoping to pump out of the principal, by indirection, an answer to unspoken questions: "Who is this good-looking woman following you around, hanging on your every word? Where did she come from and what does she want?" The principal turned the situation into a game. He kept the secret, but encouraged his colleagues to draw other, more provocative conclusions. He used the secret to charm his associates! Here we feel is the source of the puzzlement. Out of this vibration in human relations comes the ambiguous ambiance of the school reported by the female researcher in her early visits.

## C. Our Response to the Heisenberg Problem

We are aware that as ethnographers, our mere presence brings about changes in the environment we are observing. How have we corrected for any aberration of objectivity that our presence has caused? As the above narrative indicates, corrective measures may be only partially successful. But there are, we feel, compensating advantages which are not insignificant in judging the overall integrity of this kind of research:

1. Access--Access to the research site is recognized throughout the ethnographic community as a central problem in research design. In light of the special situation in the Chicago schools, we believed as a team that access to participating schools and even access to alternative schools might be jeopardized, possibly summarily cut off, by any behavior on our part which indicated lack of cooperation. As noted above, some concessions seemed to us appropriate in return for which we maintained a working relationship with our target sites.

2. New data--The principal's behavior toward the researcher is itself the source of a special kind of data. That relationship reveals a good deal about the psychological security of the principal, his or her willingness to entrust confidences to the researcher, and by implication, to other peer outsiders. In the case of the Halloween Contest example, the principal's co-optation of the researcher not only revealed a hidden side of the principal's behavior but alerted the researcher to a new dimension of data gathering. The research site was affected, but the observational sophistication of the researcher was deepened and sharpened as a result of the incident. Hitherto unnoticed tactics of the principal came to the surface and became part of the formal record.

3. Self-revelation--An argument can be made for relating to the principal in such a way as to provoke that person into self-revelation in the job. Solipsism may not be good for the soul, but it certainly is good for the ethnographic data gatherer. The more the researcher can get the observee to talk, to expatiate on the trials and excitements of the job, the deeper is our understanding of what we are looking at. In many researcher-principal interactions we have detected an

expanding volubility of the principal as the two individuals become more comfortable with one another. From the researcher's standpoint, hurrying this development along by deliberately cultivating a trusting relationship is an ultimate plus for the research effort. This means that, in some situations, we actually learn more about the job under view by turning away from a cold, clinical approach to engage in a human interchange with the occupant.

In sum, we have concluded that the ethnographic strategy does indeed engender some disturbances in the site. But these are not all bad or counterproductive. In our dealings with sixteen principals we have found that if we are unable to maintain an antiseptic distance while observing them, we can nevertheless acquire a kind of intellectual rapport with them as people. Without getting identified with their job or their personalities, we have been able to worm our way more completely into the principal's feelings, satisfactions, anxieties and overall responses to his work than would be possible in a more strictly disciplined approach. This body of somewhat more affective material provides us with a fuller, richer texture in which to study the phenomenon of discretionary decision-making at the principal level.

## Footnotes

[1] As things turned out, we received only four turn-downs to our invitation to become a subject principal for the study. Two begged off because of impending retirement.. A third principal was about to run for public office, and he and his district superintendent agreed that involvment with the project would represent an undesirable distraction. A fourth principal graciously declined because she was assuming her first principalship in a difficult school with a hostile community organization, and she felt that the presence of a researcher would only complicate an already volatile situation.

[2] Mark Benny, David Riesman and Shirley A. Star, "Age and Sex in the Interview," The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 62, 1956, pp. 143-152.

[3] Ibid., p. 144.

[4] Ibid., p. 152.

[5] Ibid., p. 145.

[6] Ibid., p. 144.